BLUEPRINT

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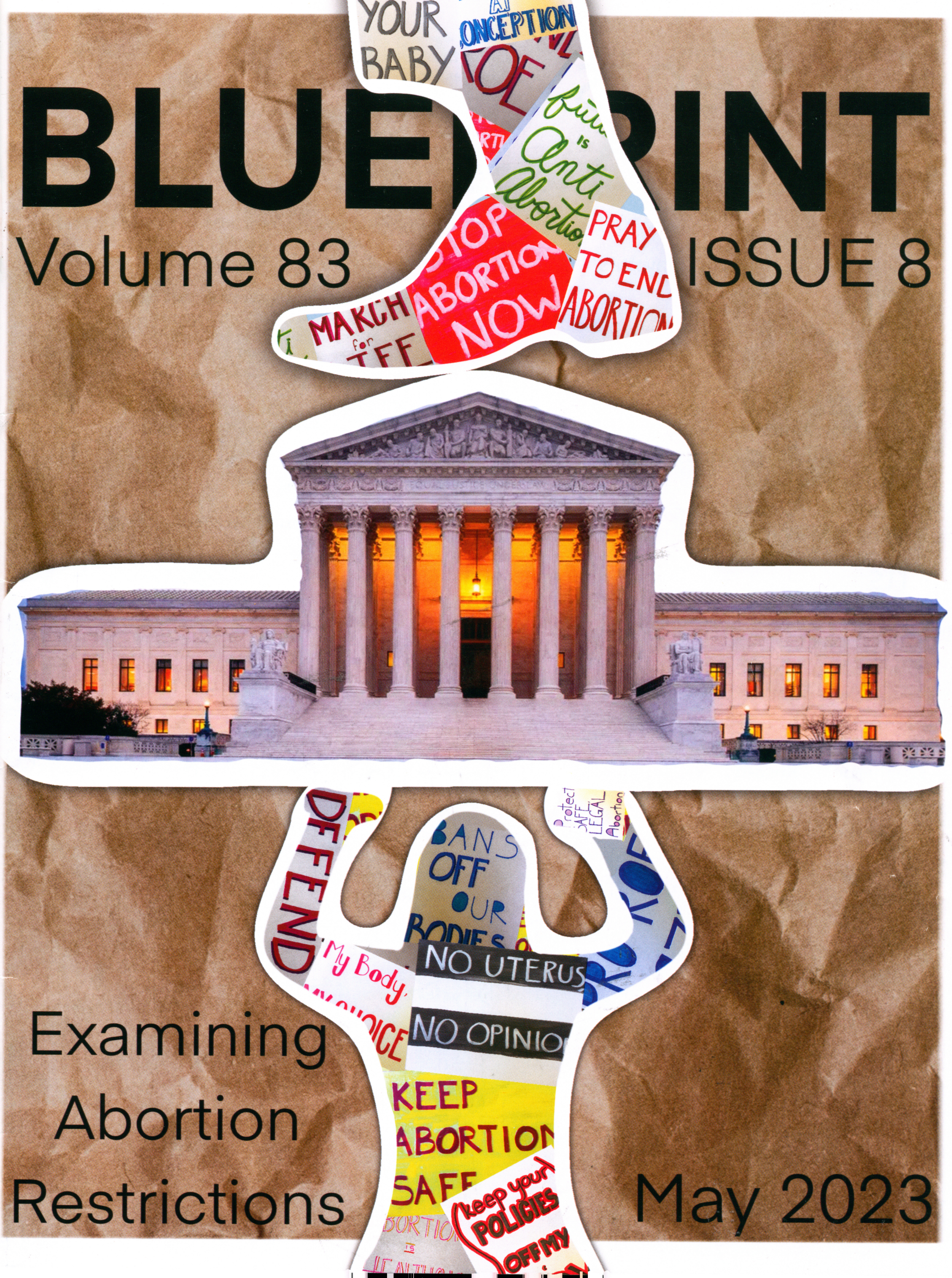
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Examining Abortion Restrictions

May 2023

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

Hello! This is our first issue with our new editorial staff, and also our first issue as Print Editors-in-Chief. As *Blueprint's* new Editors-in-Chief, we are very excited to lead *Blueprint* during the 2023-2024 school year and continue the tradition of reporting on our community's news.

In our final issue of the school year, *Blueprint* examines abortion rights as the one-year anniversary of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* approaches. We aim to educate our readers on not only national legislation but also the rights of citizens in California today.

This issue also marks our last with our advisor, Ms. Moore. *Blueprint* dedicates this issue to her in celebration of her time teaching at Acalanes and her advisorship of *Blueprint*. We want to thank her for her commitment to student journalism, and for fostering a sense of curiosity within us and the program as a whole.

Please reach out to our editorial staff through *Blueprint* Online with any stories or questions. We look forward to sharing with you in the fall.

Wishing you a relaxing summer,

Jacqueline Kuhner & Melina Nath, Print Editors-in-Chief

EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW

Ready to Hit the Books

Commemorating Advisor Natalie Moore's 16 years of teaching at Acalanes

Marisa Guerra Echeverria and Lyanne Wang | Staff Writers

Jacqueline Kuhner, Melina Nath, Griffin Ruebner and Zach Snyder contributed interviews to this story.

This issue is dedicated to Natalie Moore

When students, staff, and administrators alike enter Room 209, their eyes meet walls decorated with license plate drawings, tacked-up artwork, and a white board bursting with multicolored quotes from students, teachers, and famous icons. To the far right of the room, they may encounter the teacher, Natalie Moore, oftentimes working on lesson plans, having a laugh with co-workers, or offering counsel to her students. To many Acalanes community members, Room 209 has been a port in the storm that is high school education, and it will retain that legacy for years to come.

After 16 years of teaching at Acalanes and four years of advising Acalanes *Blueprint*, educator Natalie Moore will pursue her dream of becoming a librarian at Las Lomas High School, leaving behind a lasting legacy at Acalanes.

Prior to joining the Acalanes community, Moore worked for several years at Northgate High School, where she worked alongside her husband, drama teacher Ed Meehan. Educators around Moore remember her ambition to perfect her craft as a teacher in an environment she loved.

"My first impressions were, this is somebody that loves teaching English, that loves the English language, that has very high standards for the students that she's serving. I met her when she was teaching in a different district, and she just really wanted to find the best possible school, the best possible colleagues, and the best possible students so she could be the best possible teacher she could be," former Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) Governing Board member Richard Whitmore said.

Upon discovering positions available at Acalanes, Moore and Meehan applied and joined the Acalanes High School staff in 2007.

"Ms. Moore, through a series of turns of events, wound up getting an interview at Acalanes. And then all of a sudden, we found out that there were two openings ... in the District. And we both started to go for it," Meehan said.

Acalanes administration had been drawn to Moore due to her vibrant energy, passion for English, and student-focused approach to high school education.

"She was student-centered, dynamic, [and] creative, and when I first met her, that was apparent. And then, watching her in the classroom, she was one of the best English teachers I've had an opportunity to observe ... So she was a good addition to the Acalanes High School faculty back in 2007," former Acalanes High School Principal and current AUHSD Superintendent Dr. John Nickerson said.

At Acalanes, Moore gained recognition in various ways, including being one of three Contra County teachers selected to win the $10,000 Eukel Teacher Trust Award in 2013 and winning the Rose Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2014.

One of her most significant contributions to Acalanes was the creation of the American Literature and History Threads program with history teacher Brian Smith in 2011. Prior to the implementation of the block schedule, Moore and Smith would combine two 50-minute periods of their respective subjects of English and history to enhance students' understanding of historical periods and the works produced during those times.

The Threads program exists at Acalanes today and has inspired staff members to start interdisciplinary programs of their own. Smith attributes the program's success to his close teaching partnership with Moore and their creation of a close-knit community in a shared classroom setting.

"We love teaching that class together and it's been an incredible experience to get to work so closely with a teacher. We have … almost opposite ways of teaching in a classroom, but it really worked well together. I think that we were able to, over the last 12 years, create a family with that class," Smith said.

An additional landmark contribution from Moore came from her advisorship over Acalanes Blueprint. Moore's tenure in Blueprint oversaw the program's expansion to include two classes, of which she aided as a Journalism 1 advisor in the 2019-2020 school year and as a Journalism 2-3 advisor ever since.

"The former principal [Travis Bell] ... had the vision to select someone who would be trained [and] versed in some of the basics of journalism and Blueprint in particular ... The course just got packed,

it took off ... [during] her year of advisorship [in Journalism 1], her students formed a really strong bond of respect and mutual collaboration," former *Blueprint* advisor Larry Freeman said.

Blueprint students who have worked closely with Moore emphasize her commitment to local and high school journalism, as well as her atmosphere of encouragement in the classroom to support the student journalists.

"I learned the tenets of good journalism from Ms. Moore, but more importantly I carry with me her lessons about strength and compassion. I will always be grateful for the atmosphere she created in *Blueprint*," former *Blueprint* Print Editor in Chief and Class of 2021 alumna Jamie Lattin said.

Despite the challenges that come with advising a high school paper, past Blueprint leaders applaud Moore for her continued guidance and fostering of independence in a student-run program.

"I will always remember her trusting us to do the right thing," former *Blueprint* Online Editor-in-Chief and Class of 2022 alumna Stella Heo said. "Of course being the *Blueprint* advisor is very stressful, especially when you have such a large reader base. It meant a lot that she trusted us enough to just kind of do our own thing and run our own site."

Other Acalanes community members have noted that Moore's presence in *Blueprint* has encouraged students to report on and inspire school-wide conversations on systemic issues facing the student body.

"*Blueprint* is a part of the civil society of this school," AP Comparative Government and World History teacher Joseph Schottland said. "And [Moore] was also very instrumental in raising the level of conversation about issues I think of more than anything else ... Everything from gender equity at the school, to diversity in terms of racial and ethnic diversity, also just getting the student body of the school to consider certain issues by highlighting them in *Blueprint*."

Beyond innovation and leadership in school-wide programs, Moore has created deep-rooted bonds at Acalanes among students and staff alike. Many of these bonds stem from students' admiration of the unique way Moore teaches English.

"It was very inspiring to have Ms. Moore as a teacher because she is very passionate about English as a subject, as well as specific books. It was just really cool to be in an environment where I had a teacher who just so obviously cared about what she was teaching," senior Laura Bea said.

Students of Moore repeat that one of her most prominent traits is her dedication, which inspired some of her former students to pursue teaching.

"Ms. Moore is one of those teachers [and] advisors that you never forget ... Teachers like Ms. Moore are one of the reasons I chose to be a teacher myself," former Burton Valley Elementary School teacher and Class of 2009 alumna Meg Geist said.

Moore's commitment to caring for her students aligns with her dedication.

"In ninth grade, my brother was diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia, and [Moore] supported me through that," senior Amani Williams said. "I definitely credit her with inspiring me to write and to talk about myself because she's the one who told me that my words were important, and I actually had something meaningful to say."

Moore's ability to emotionally support students leads many to find Room 209 as one of their safe spaces on campus.

"She provides a place for myself as well as my peers to go to whenever we need to talk, or need a laugh ... She has provided me with endless support throughout my junior year academics, and is an all around amazing teacher," junior Macie Rainey said.

Moore's love and respect for her colleagues has also made her an active leader in the Acalanes staff community. Educators note that she made meaningful efforts to keep morale high during the COVID-19 pandemic and its strain on teachers over remote learning.

"During the pandemic, teachers were feeling distant from each other because some teachers weren't coming here [to school]. She sponsored a get-together in her driveway, and so a bunch of teachers went over to her house and brought lawn chairs, some drinks, and some food. We sat socially distant, but emotionally close," Schottland said.

Moore has formed extremely tight-knit friendships with staff due to shared experiences throughout her time teaching at Acalanes.

"Our second year working together, we both ended up being pregnant at the very same time. We were already friends, or maybe more like acquaintances ... but being pregnant together as teachers at school and then going through birth and our maternity leaves overlapped, and just kind of all of those things definitely cemented our friendship," AP Environmental Science and Human and Social Development teacher Jada Paniagua said.

As a teacher known for her seniority and involvement in the school, Moore has also been an extra pillar of support for incoming staff

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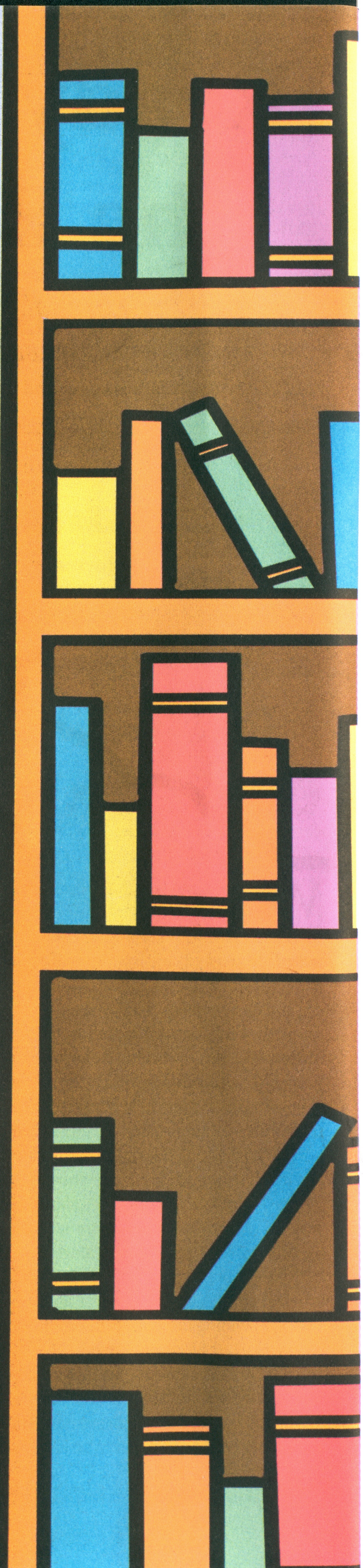


The Special Olympics Brings Sprints and Smiles Onto the Field

Acalanes hosted the ninth annual Contra Costa County Special Olympics

Reid Aldrich and Nico Ortman | Online Managing Editor and Staff Writer

Blueprint Contributing Photo/Nisa Khoury

Students line the field in anticipation as Special Olympics athletes take a ceremonial lap around the track. As the athletes cross the finish line, the Special Olympics begin, sending students into a frenzy of excitement as the first events commence.

Special Education students from around the county competed in the annual Special Olympics event on April 21 at Acalanes.

With the establishment of the Contra Costa County Schools Partnership Program in 2007, Special Olympics Northern California collaborated with the Contra Costa County Office of Education to bring Unified Sports to the county region. After Acalanes hosted a Unified Sports track and field event in 2013, the Special Olympics became an annual event at Acalanes, making this year's competition the ninth hosted in the school's history.

"Acalanes has been hosting [track and field] for many years now. In the beginning, they hosted our Bay Area Games, a yearly track meet that athletes from all over Nor-Cal traveled to compete in. Then, about five to six years ago, we stopped doing the games so they switched to hosting the county meet instead," Special Olympics Northern California and Nevada Area Manager and Schools Partnership Program Manager Sam Schmidt said.

Acalanes invites all schools in Contra Costa County to participate in the annual event. However, there has been a decline in school attendance following the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We [had] 30 classes signed up to attend. The highest it has ever been pre-pandemic was 56 classes. I get sad that it is not the same, but I think that funding has changed and there has been a lot of teacher turnover, which might play a role in why the number is reduced," Leadership teacher Katherine Walton said.

However, hundreds of athletes still participated this year. Acalanes leadership students played a large role in organizing the event by coordinating with Special Olympics coordinators and Acalanes Boosters. Additionally, Leadership recruited many student volunteers to prepare for hundreds of student-athletes attending the competition.

"We started with gathering volunteers and we pushed that out through publicity online, social media, and through posters. We also reached out to certain people specifically," Leadership Community Outreach Board Member and junior Allie Van De Poel said. "I think it is really cool that all of the students like myself ... get to help plan the event."

Leadership began setting up at 6:00 a.m. and volunteers arrived at 8:00 a.m. Before the events officially commenced, the volunteers dispersed to their assigned stations to ensure that the event ran smoothly.

"I think the overall experience was really great because it felt good to help others have a fun time. My favorite part was helping my buddy Colin with his events ," volunteer and sophomore Skyler Platto said.

Special Education teachers also accompanied their students who prepared for their various athletic events.

"There [were] different stations with some events on the track, the field, and on the grass field next to the football field. There [were] a lot of schools participating at once, so we [cycled from] station to station through all of the events and each kid [got to] decide which events they [wanted] to participate in," Essential Skills teacher Matthew Rasmussen said.

With the oversight of volunteers and teachers, the athletes took part in many individual events, including the 50-meter dash, 100-meter dash, mile race, 4x100 meter relay, shot put, javelin throw, long jump, and wheelchair race.

"I did the four lap race and the shorter 100-meter race, too," Special Olympics athlete and senior Sammy Hamalian said.

While most students participated in independent events, the students had the opportunity to complete a relay race with their classmates.

"My favorite part was running the relay with Sammy, Fauna, and Ainsley," Special Olympics athlete and senior Kenny Tinley said.

Many of the athletes found success in their events and emerged proud of their achievements.

"The throwing was my favorite because I threw the ball out of there," Special Olympics athlete and junior Colin Kamian said.

While some athletes focused on their accomplishments on the field, others enjoyed seeing their friends from other schools.

"It was really fun seeing my friends ... [like] Cici and Ryan," Special Olympics athlete and frosh Lulu Jensen said.

Many other students and staff highlighted the importance of the Special Olympics, as the joy expressed across the faces of all those who participated brightened their days.

"I think that we are super fortunate to hold the event at our school and it really does bring a smile to my face to see everyone so happy," volunteer and sophomore Justin Tan said.

Celebration and Fun are Plentiful at the Lafayette Earth Day Festival

A celebration of Earth Day draws in large crowds and many vendors

Maddyx Bride, Sophie Gold, and Aya O'Neal | News Copy Editor, Staff Writer, and Arts Copy Editor

Blueprint Contributing Photo/Kai Mills

Although being environmentally conscious should be a daily habit, Earth Day presents an opportunity to celebrate nature and sustainable practices.

Sustainable Lafayette hosted the Earth Day Festival on April 23 at the Downtown Lafayette Plaza Park to educate the community on how to become more environmentally friendly.

The festival is an annual and free event that allows citizens to learn about ways to become more sustainable and eco-friendly through fellow community members.

"Our hope is that people take away that there are a lot of good things happening in our local community around the environment and … hopefully people take away that our youth in our community is concerned about the environment and taking action," Sustainable Lafayette Board member Brad Crane said.

The festival hosted a wide array of vendors who all had a central goal of helping combat environmental issues.

Blueprint Contributing Photo/ Kai Mills

"Every vendor [that was there had] something to teach everybody … about how to be more sustainable, how to be a better community member, [and] how to do things that will positively impact the environment and the Earth," Lafayette Community Garden volunteer Linda Zuber said.

Live music by the Jim Ocean Band accompanied the various booths, who played Earth-themed original music with the goal of inspiring youth within the community.

"We want to reach from our generation to yours … We want to inspire you to understand the issues in the environment, and [how] to face them," Co-owner of Ocean Works Productions Kathy Ocean said.

In addition to vendors, businesses who collaborated with the Festival recognized the positive impact it had on their companies through exposure.

"It introduces people to things they didn't even know they had in the community. Nobody really realized Pedego was here until we teamed up with this strip mall and the festival, they all support each other," Pedego Bikes Ambassador Joelle Arguello said.

Sustainable Lafayette also aimed to engage Lafayette youth through the event. Likewise, students spoke to the significance of using the festival as a chance to educate their peers about the consequential topics.

"I think students should come to Earth Day festivals or anything that involves environmental protection and awareness because we need to educate ourselves. We are the future voters of our country, and I think it's super important for us to spread awareness in our community," senior Kylie Choi said.

The festival gave Acalanes students the possibility to bring back what they learned at the festival to campus in order to create a more eco-friendly community.

"A lot of Acalanes students attended the event, and learned about how to be a more sustainable and eco-friendly citizen. I hope students will bring this back to the Acalanes campus and community," sophomore Sophie Sinha said.

The festival offered hope of a brighter future by educating everyone about the Earth in a fun and engaging way.

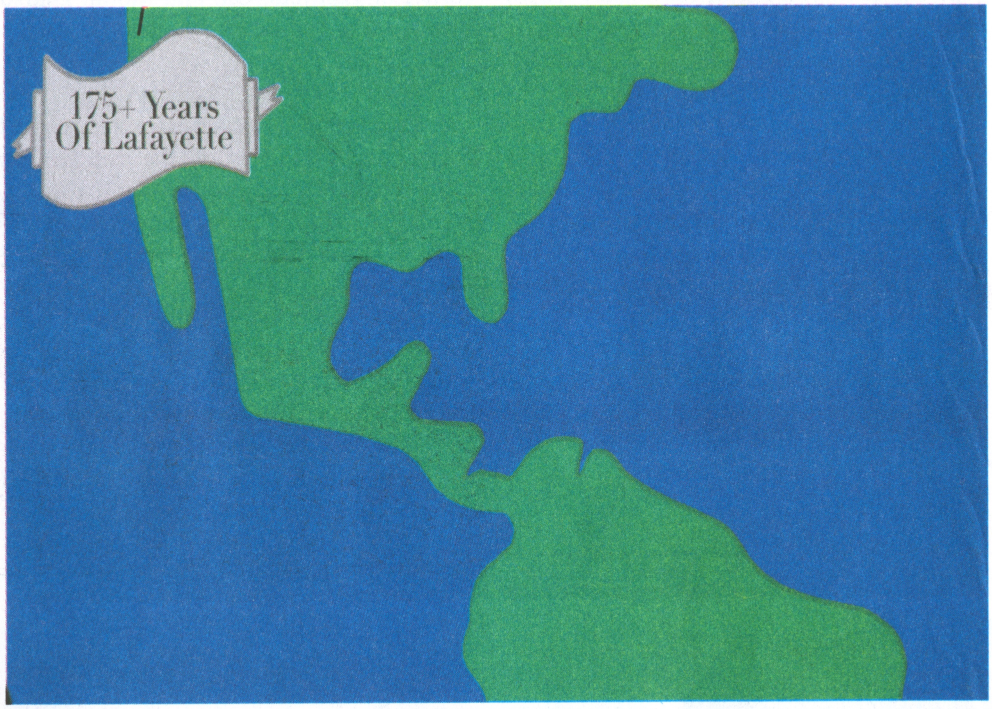
"It is easy to be overwhelmed by trying to do everything for the Earth all the time, and [by] all the bad news about the climate, but I think if we make it fun and educational like today, people will absorb the information much better," Hollie's Homegrown owner Hollie Lucas-Alcalay said.

Lafayette City Council Celebrates 175+ Years Since City's Founding

City Council partners with Lafayette Historical Society on initiative to spread awareness about the town's history

Marisa Guerra Echeverria | Staff Writer

Cedric He contributed interviews to this story



Blueprint Graphic/Nastia Grits

On a fateful day in February 1847, American pioneer Elam Brown and his wife Margaret surveyed the rolling green hills and founded the town known as Lafayette. More than 175 years later, community members enjoy its picturesque landscapes, charming locales, and robust public education system. However, despite the town's regular observance of its anniversary, many residents do not know much about the land's long and storied past as Rancho Acalanes under Mexicans and Spaniards, as well as its raw beauty under its original inhabitants, the Saclan tribe.

Upon the 176th anniversary of Lafayette's founding, the Lafayette Historical Society (LHS) partnered with the City Council to launch the 175+ Years Celebration, an informational initiative to educate the town through literature and artwork around town about the town's past prior to colonization.

The idea for the 175+ Years Celebration stemmed from conversations between LHS President Mary McCosker and Mayor Carl Anduri, who both sought to commemorate Lafayette's recent milestones and its storied past. In the past, the City Council has organized several historical festivities, but this celebration is unique in its aim to acknowledge the city's precolonial history and shed light on the land's Native American and Hispanic heritage.

"This year's observance is different because we are looking at the entire history of Lafayette, specifically including the first people to live on the land that is now Lafayette and the Spanish and Mexican people who preceded the settlers who came from the eastern part of the United States," Lafayette Mayor Carl Anduri said.

Additionally, City Council members note that the current 175+ Years Celebration is the first historical commemoration of its kind with such a degree of widespread community involvement, making the Celebration a deeply engaging event for all.

"Lafayette has celebrated milestones in the past ... but there have been no similar initiatives distinctly honoring Lafayette's history nor celebrations of this scope with creative articulation," City Manager Niroop Srivatsa said.

One of the initiative's key features includes presentations detailing specific aspects of Lafayette's multicultural history. The LHS hosts these presentations during the first City Council meeting of the month.

"This year, the Historical Society is doing a five to 10 minute introduction before each [City Council] meeting about some facet of Lafayette history. We've done the indigenous people, we've done the rancho period, we've done the pioneers," McCosker said. "It's a way for the City Council and anybody who's watching to find out a little bit more about how Lafayette started way back 10,000 years ago and ... how it's morphed."

The LHS also collaborated with the City's communications team to promote education via one of its published works, Images of Lafayette (2007), which McCosker and LHS volunteer Mary Solon wrote. The City distributed copies through neighborhood Lending Library in order to expand the title's accessibility to the community.

"We wanted people to be able to learn about Lafayette history, and participate in a celebration in a variety of different ways," Lafayette Communications Analyst Suzanne Larla said. "This idea came up as a way that someone could, at their own pace, read about Lafayette history and then maybe talk to their friends and neighbors about it. Knowing that there are free little libraries throughout town, we thought it would be a fun way to distribute the booklets that way."

Additionally, the LHS partnered with the City's Public Art Committee (PAC) to commemorate Lafayette history by creating a stylized series of seven utility boxes in downtown Lafayette. Both organizations sought to collaborate due to the PAC's previous initiatives of local utility box art installations in the area.

"Between 2018 and 2022, the PAC worked collaboratively with Lafayette Partners in Education to showcase local student artwork on utility boxes along Mount Diablo Blvd. Right around the time the student art wraps were reaching the end of their six-year lifespan, the Lafayette Historical Society (LHS) came to the PAC and presented the idea of celebrating Lafayette history on the boxes," PAC Staff Liaison Jenny Rosen said.

The team managing the utility boxes, which consisted of City Council, LHS, and PAC members, devised the designs from the Historical Society's archives of historical photos. The artwork is representative of Lafayette's indigenous populations, depictions of popular leisure activities in the 1930s, and pictures of Lafayette's early downtown and city life. Each utility box also has a QR code and description for Lafayette residents interested in learning more about the image.

"The Lafayette Historical Society has an amazing archive of historical photos. The difficult part was selecting the photos because there were so many," project designer Danielle Gogo-Gallagher said. "We included a description under each photo as well as a QR code so that you could scan the QR code to go to the [LHS] website where you could learn all about these photos that you're seeing."

One significant utility box located on the corner of Lafayette Cir. and Mount Diablo Blvd. depicts Lafayette's first inhabitants, the Saclan tribe.

"The box [shows] the Saclan people, which was really beautiful because we also wanted to increase awareness of the people that came before the more modern Lafayette, [like] the indigenous people, the Saclan people, and the rancheros and the Spaniards," Gogo-Gallagher said.

Current community-wide efforts to delve into Lafayette's pre-colonial roots coincide with students' emerging interest in the city's indigenous and Hispanic history, including in its relation to Acalanes High School's mascot, the Don. Students' current educational initiatives on the Don's history have further cemented the importance of historical reckoning in the community's consciousness.

"The past and our history has so much of an influence on how we think about things today. And to understand the roots of what something stands for … will help us better understand the institutions we see today," senior Sophie Westen said.

Furthermore, some students desire to learn more about Lafayette's history, particularly towards the negative elements of colonization.

"I think [schools] should teach a little more about the bad parts of the settlements during the 1600s ... There's a lot of massacres, things that happened during that time, so I think they should focus a little more on that," sophomore Drew Hansen said.

Overall, the city's youth value the community's celebration of Lafayette history, as it promotes civic engagement and value for future generations.

"I just think it's so important to understand and respect the land you live on and the history of that land. Doing that makes you more present in the world and more compassionate of people and generally just more engaged in society," Westen said.

A Dedication to Ms. Moore

Continued from 2

members.

"Ms. Moore took me under her wing and really supported me," Journalism 1 advisor and English teacher Aviva Maslow said. "She shared all of her teaching resources with me, she helped me plan out my curriculum for juniors last year and just made me feel super welcomed. Just seeing her style of leadership and classroom management has been a really good learning experience for me."

Overall, plenty of Acalanes community members will feel Moore's absence in an acute way.

"The idea of being at Acalanes without Ms. Moore being there feels a little bit empty," senior Sophia Acuff said. "She's a really safe person for me on campus ... And it's just going to be really sad that … other people on campus who might know Ms. Moore won't have that anymore."

Fellow teachers emphasize the importance of exploring new experiences within one's career in light of Moore's new path.

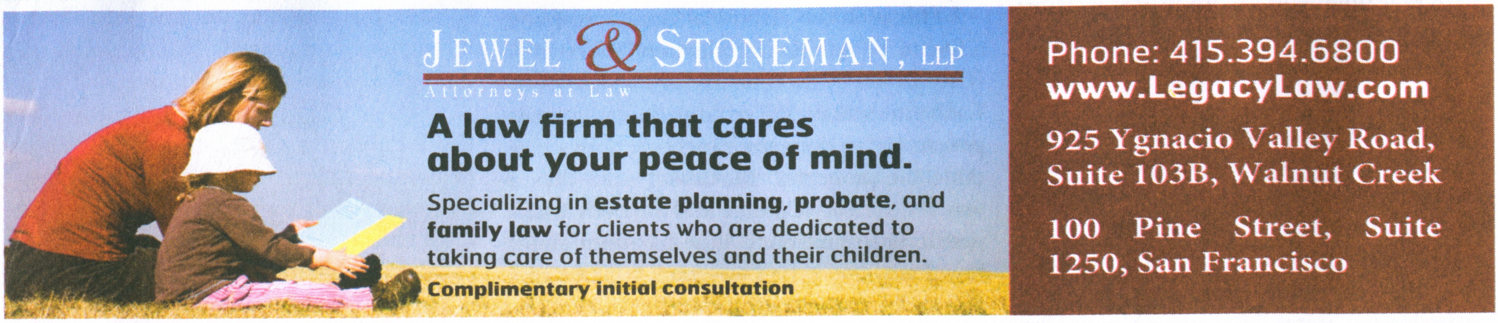
"As teachers, so many of us are fulfilled by learning and growth and most of us are also going to be in education for decades. I'm really excited that she gets to continue in education, which is something that she loves, but she also gets to have this entirely new experience of growth and learning and exploration ... I'm really excited for her," Paniagua said.

Educators who have seen Moore's career progress in the past two decades believe that her strong attributes as a teacher will ultimately enhance her role as a future librarian.

"You want your librarian to be a teacher at heart. You want them to be connected to students, you want them to understand what student learning is going on and how the library and all those resources can contribute … Being able to bring all the knowledge she has into this different setting is going to be just a great opportunity for her," Whitmore said.

Moore's past and present students admire her for her commitment to education and literature, as well as her advocacy for students in the next promising phase of her career.

"I'm proud of her for dedicating her life now to saving the books that need to be in classrooms that are representative of all cultures, identities, and backgrounds. I'm really thankful that she's taking her time to dedicate her life to ensuring that … every student has access to those [books and] still putting students first in a different way. I'm just so excited to see what this journey brings for her," Class of 2017 alumnus Wesley Rosemont said.



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The Class Cup: Basketball and Volleyball and Kickball, Oh My!

Students participate in the Class Cup, a friendly schoolwide athletic competition

Zoe Stafford and Sophie Gold | Arts Section Editor and Staff Writer

Blueprint Photo/Ben Kokel

Students cheer from the bleachers while their peers run around the court, fighting for their grades' victory in the first ever Class Cup.

Students came together to play basketball, volleyball, and kickball for the Class Cup, a new grade-level competition that started on Jan. 25 and ended April 28.

Leadership created the games as a new form of class bonding to bring grade levels and the student body together. The class officers from all grades began planning the event at the beginning of the school year.

"We had to organize teams, how it was going to run, create the point system, the rules, and also what people would [get] for winning the Class Cup," Junior Class President Jenna Steele said.

The Class Cup aimed to make the bonding activities more inclusive and accessible to the student population.

"We were finding the same group of kids [were] attending [the old class bondings]. While they were fun and had some value, there wasn't a cross section of students," Leadership teacher Katherine Walton said.

Throughout the year leadership plans a variety of class bondings, such as parties and cookie decorating, that are normally separated by grade. The Class Cup introduced a unique schoolwide experience.

"If it really does what we're hoping it does, our school will be better bonded [and] more people [will be] friendly with each other. [It's about] just taking down those divisions between cliques," Frosh Class President Oliver Stoneman said.

Blue Crew, one of the two senior teams participating, won the basketball portion of the competition with a total score of 800 points.

"It was fun, no one took it too seriously, but it was fun to win … it was important to make it a positive experience for everyone and not just to win every game. [I was] just making sure everyone got to play," Class Cup Basketball Team Captain and senior Colin Norstad said.

Like basketball, volleyball provided the competitiveness of a school sport while maintaining a more relaxed and friendly environment.

"Everyone was having a really fun time, we were all cheering for each other even though some people didn't know each other very well," frosh Ellie Blanchard said.

The junior class' team won the volleyball games in a close final game against the seniors with a score of 16-15.

"It was fun. I've never played outside of the school [volleyball] season so it was a fun experience doing it inside school hours with a bunch of people watching," junior Justin Law said.

Classes maintained a friendly and enthusiastic energy while also participating in some lighthearted competition.

"I saw a lot of friendly competition, a lot of laughing and a lot of cheering. Everyone had good sportsmanship and understood that it was just a game between friends that didn't really need to escalate from there," Class Cup Basketball Team Captain and sophomore Dulci Vail said.

Not only did student-athletes participate in the Class Cup, the event was open to any student regardless of individual skill who wanted to have fun.

"[Everyone was] keeping good sportsmanship ... [people had] fun at lunch and [got] to include people who aren't actually playing basketball for Acalanes," Class Cup Basketball Team Captain and frosh Gavin Dodge said.

After volleyball, the juniors took the lead with 2000 points.

"It [felt] great, I [felt] on top of the world. It's great to know that we have the most Class Cup points," junior Class Cup volleyball team captain Mika Bocobo said.

In April, the fierce kickball competition began. The sophomores and juniors fought for victory, ending with the sophomores winning the kickball portion of the Class Cup. However, the juniors scored more points overall, winning the competition.

"It's great to have a class competition between the grades, and also bragging rights are always fun," Class Cup Kickball Team Captain and junior Nicole Parlett said.

Leadership hopes the Class Cup will be an ongoing tradition that will change and adapt to what the future classes want to do.

"When we were thinking about [the Class Cup] we were trying to have the idea for it to continue for all years so they can change the sports and do other activities too. It's planned to be continued for the following years," Senior Class President Sophi MacKay said.

News Briefs

California Supreme Court Comes to Decision on Lafayette Housing Development

Maddyx Bride | News Copy Editor

Following a long and contentious history, the O'Brien Land company's Terraces of Lafayette Housing Development Project officially went underway as the California Supreme Court rejected review from the organization suing the project, Save Lafayette.

The O'Brien Land company originally submitted the proposal back in 2011 and met some backlash from citizens of the city and the Save Lafayette organization. After much back and forth between the city, developer, and citizens, the City Council approved the project in 2020. However, the Save Lafayette sued the City to reverse approval of the project, and the Contra Costa Supreme Court subsequently rejected the claims.

Save Lafayette requested the California Supreme Court to review the Court of Appeal's decision, and in March 2023 the California Supreme court denied Save Lafayette's request, therefore cementing the Court of Appeal's decision in favor of the city.

The Terraces of Lafayette can now begin construction on the 315-unit housing project, which is sited for Deer Hill Rd. and Pleasant Hill Rd., across from Acalanes High School. These new homes bring Lafayette closer to meeting its required new affordable housing in proximity to Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) and are a big step forward in bringing more low-cost and eco-friendly housing to Lafayette.

The Don's Dialogue Explores the Mascot Discussion

Avery Robb | Print News Section Editor

Acalanes Parents Club (APC) held the most recent Don's Dialogue in the Acalanes library on Apr. 19, where students informed parents about the circling discussions of the Acalanes Don.

APC invited a student group to report on all campus activities and events surrounding the Don throughout the last few months. Leadership brought the same information on the Don from classrooms of students to a full library of parents and community members purely for educational purposes. The team hoped to create a cohesive understanding of why talks about the Don are resurfacing once more at Acalanes.

The student team also introduced parents to their planned curriculum to cover the Don, which Leadership has implemented with various Academy and Lunchtime meetings and presentations over the course of the past school year.

The team gave a presentation on the various interpretations behind the Don in an attempt to not only create a baseline education about the mascot, but to also ease any confusion associated with the new academy lessons. The presentation included coverage on why it is important to learn about the Don's history and its meaning for Acalanes today. After the meeting, parents were able to ask Principal Eric Shawn any questions concerning the mascot.

Scan the QR code for more information about the Dons discussion at Acalanes High School on Bluepint *Online*

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The Teacher Shortage: Conditions and Pay Keep the Teachers Away

Various factors have led to a shortage of teachers across the nation

Maddyx Bride and Hannah Geraghty | News Copy Editor and Staff Writer

As students near the end of the school year, they are met with announcements of teachers retiring, transferring to different schools, and leaving the profession. As course selections change and concerns about next year's staff arise, students wonder, 'Who's going to replace them all?'

Ongoing issues within the school system, stemmed from the COVID-19 pandemic, have caused a shortage of teachers at both Acalanes and around the country, producing potential staffing problems for the 2023-2024 school year.

Although the teacher shortage is a mainstream issue today, it roots back to over a decade ago. According to University of Massachusetts Global, the shortage began during the Great Recession, continued throughout the 2010s, but spiked in 2020.

The shortage heightened when the pandemic hit, as fewer teachers joined the workforce due to the fluctuating working conditions.

"It was exhausting … COVID just exacerbated some already existing situations, and I think that a lot of people did leave teaching because of what we went through during COVID," English and French teacher Cathy Challacombe said.

Considering the number of teachers who are part of the baby boomer generation, there simply are not enough younger teachers to fill all the vacant positions.

"There's a demographic factor of, you have a population bubble with the baby boomers who are reaching retirement age, and so as you lose a large group, you need a large group to fill, and that large group may not be there," Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) Superintendent John Nickerson said.

The lack of teachers joining the industry is, in part, due to the lack of prestige associated with the job. As a result of the historically low wages for teachers, along with the appeal of other industries with more flexible hours and higher pay, teachers are choosing to leave the industry at higher rates.

"[There are] jobs, especially in the Bay Area, like in high-tech, that pay a lot more money and I think that [it] has the potential of stock shares that are a part of the hiring package," Challecombe said. "It is hard to turn down a lot more money, and so I think those jobs seem very exciting, and that's a big part of the wealth of this state."

In some classroom environments, the growth of technological innovations tend to distract students and enable cheating. Consequently, sometimes teachers have to compete against the internet and social media for students' attention during class.

"We, as teachers, are never going to be as exciting as a TikTok video or a reel you're watching on your phone. And so now I have to take your attention away from all that exciting stuff, and figure out how to get you to pay attention to what I am doing," yoga and PE teacher Heidi Bruce said. "I don't want to police cellphones all day at work, it is frustrating, and it's not my job."

The teaching shortage makes it difficult for admin to adequately staff all the departments. Areas that normally have many candidates are becoming harder to fill.

"The most challenging, historically, have been math, science, and special education … An area that has never been a challenge historically, particularly in this district, has been English, and this year English has been more of a challenge," Dr. Nickerson said.

The lack of English teacher candidates within the district is in part due to universities shutting down their English Major programs. Being an English teacher also requires a lot of outside work for grading, a factor that possibly deters candidates.

"The problem is some of these UCs (Universities of California) have closed down their English majors. … There are fewer universities giving the degrees, so there are fewer people signing up to be English majors," AUHSD Associate Superintendent Amy McNamara said. "I also think teaching English is hard. You are grading a lot and giving a lot of feedback, so you have to really love what you do in order to do that work. I don't see a lot of candidates that are loving that idea."

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In addition, the AUHSD is also looking to create a larger and more robust Computer Science department, which is proving to be difficult because of the direct competition with the tech industry.

"Computer Science is something we are trying to grow in the schools and find teachers to do, and it is really hard to find people who have experience in it in the real world to come in and teach because they can make so much more money as a computer programmer," McNamara said.

For students, the teacher shortage may show its effects on how well they learn. When a teacher is missing from school, often teachers from unrelated departments have to take over the class.

"When a teacher is absent for a short period of time, I'm fortunate that my learning is not adversely affected, but when this becomes extended periods of absence it's difficult to stay on track and stay motivated," sophomore Leila Hamidi said.

The wage disparities between various school districts leads to some receiving many teacher applications, while lower-income schools often receive fewer applications. Districts viewed as 'destination districts', where parents will move their families to attend those schools, seem to be less affected.

"In Lafayette, we haven't seen as intense a shortage of classroom teachers as other communities. This is probably [a result] of the quality of our school district, our supportive culture for staff, a parent community that supports public education, and amazing students," Lafayette School District (LAFSD) Superintendent Brent Stephens said.

Despite Acalanes being a 'destination district', it poses different challenges for incoming teachers. The high cost of living can deter potential teachers who cannot afford to live locally.

"We live in an expensive area of the country, and state funding for schools has not kept pace with the cost of housing, food, and other essential goods. Statewide, there are not enough teacher candidates graduating from credential programs to meet the needs of school districts," Stephens said.

Additionally, the constant teacher turnover makes it more difficult for schools to have a sense of community.

"I think that students like to see their teachers in the hallways, and like to be able to pop in on them in Academy, and maybe have them for more than one class. We're not a big district, and we're not a big school, so that sense of family is kind of an important one," Challacombe said.

The district is attempting to combat the teacher shortage by expanding their programs for substitute teachers in hopes that substitute teachers will potentially get certified to become full-time teachers at Acalanes.

"Sometimes you can turn a great sub into an amazing teacher, which I think is really helpful for us. We see many subs eventually step into the classroom and become instructional assistants at Acalanes," McNamara said. "I think having a really stable pool of qualified substitutes is really important. And it enables us to pull out those new teachers into some staff development activities."

The AUHSD has also begun to accept teachers who are in the midst of fulfilling their credentials as a way to increase the amount of candidates for hire. The new policy allows those who are newly graduated or are new to teaching to find their way into the district.

"I think the best thing that we can do is really work with the universities to have people be placed here for student teaching and have people placed here for internships. I don't mind if people don't have teaching credentials. We've had some amazing teachers placed here who didn't have their credentials at the time, and we can grow [them] into the teachers that we want and need," McNamara said.

With many teachers leaving for various reasons, District admin has already begun to hire many of their new staff for the next school year, with an estimated 80 percent of positions filled for next year; about 30 percent more than the average that have been hired by May each year.

"We went out early, and he had to hire seven science teachers, eight English teachers, and we had four math positions open. We had a ton, we'll have 35 new teachers in the district next year… We went out really early in February, and we went out hard with recruiting," McNamara said.

The district emphasizes the need for the next generation to become teachers in order to combat the shortage, and also because it is a noble and essential profession.

"Becoming a teacher is really important … because it can be a great and a really fulfilling profession," Dr. Nickerson said.

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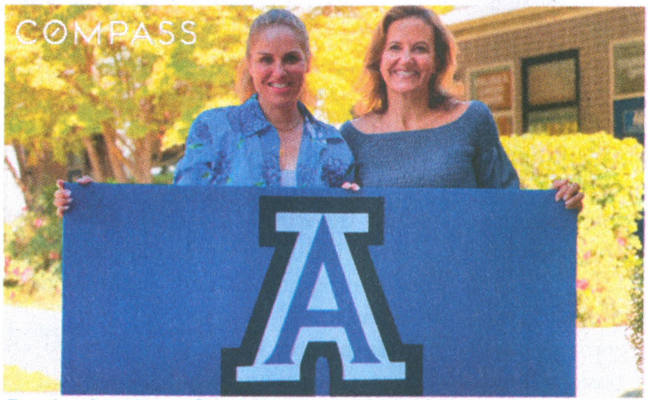

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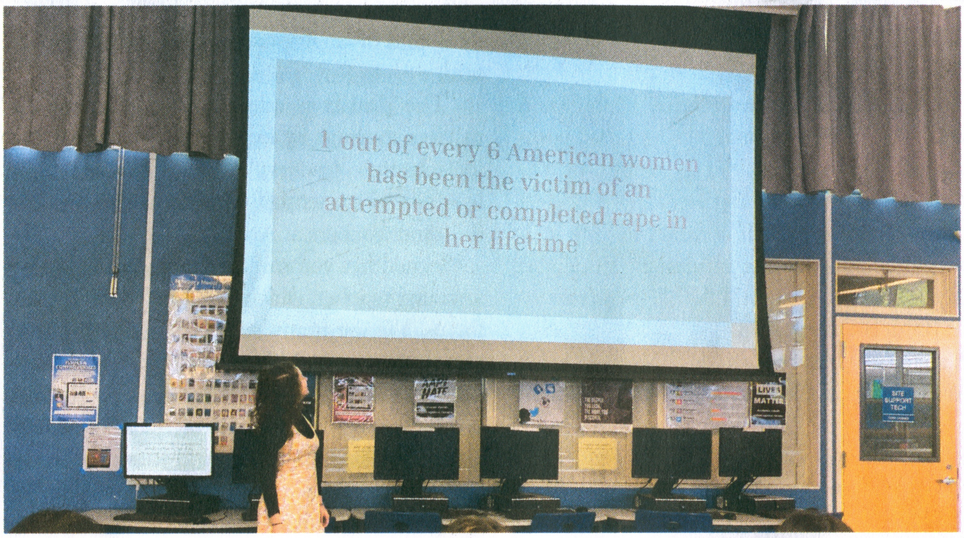
Girl Scouts are Going For Gold … but it's not Always About First Place

Acalanes Girl Scouts achieve Gold Awards

Levand Koopah and Cameron Powell | Sports Beats Editor and Online Editor at Large


1 out of every 6 American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime

Blueprint Photo/Haley Chelemedos

Every year, a few local Girl Scouts go above and beyond to present imaginative projects which spark change in the community and bring meaning to the saying "leave it better than you found it."

Seven Girl Scouts in the joint Troop 33077-32886 collaborated amongst themselves and various other groups and organizations to achieve their Gold Awards during the 2022-23 school year.

Prior to earning their Gold Award, Girl Scouts must complete at least one Senior or Ambassador Journey, a session in which they learn how to make change in a community and build on various skills. Then, Girl Scouts come up with an idea based on an issue they see present in their community. They must submit a proposal to Girl Scouts of Northern California for approval. After the board approves the idea, scouts can begin to plan and execute their projects.

"The Gold Award is the most substantial award that you can get in Girl Scouts, and it's a really significant project because each girl has to come up with a topic that she feels committed to and really dedicated towards," Co-Troop Leader of Troop 33077-32886 Marisa Medina said.

In total, the board requires scouts to spend a minimum of 80 hours working on their projects. Still, most scouts breach this qualification in order to create lasting change in the community.

Sophia Acuff

Senior Sophia Acuff is in the process of achieving her Gold Award. Her project consists of two main parts. The first was a presentation to all frosh PE classes about sexual assault, harassment, and rape culture during the week of April 10. The second part was a workshop event on May 7 to educate attendees on sexual violence.

As president of the Acalanes Feminism Club, Acuff gained extensive knowledge of issues surrounding sexual violence and became passionate in bringing awareness to them.

"A lot of the things that you see online when you are researching feminism [are] stories from a lot of different women, and they're just everywhere about experiences that women have had or dangers that women face just walking down the street every single day. It's really concerning to see things like that, and to accept that that is the world that we live in … I can't change the entire country or anything, but I can help educate my community," Acuff said.

Behind the scenes, Acuff put together presentations, trained presenters, managed funding, and publicized the events. By the time her project is completed, Acuff hopes that the information she shares with the community will prevent sexual violence from occurring within and beyond the Acalanes community.

"I'm creating an event for all students in the AUHSD school district … it's going to have a lot of different stations on basic self-defense training, [and] we're going to have a keynote speaker," Acuff said. "[Teaching about] how we can be active in disrupting that and disrupting rape culture and helping protect victims and validate victims and overall reduce the amount of victims we have in our community and then, hopefully [people can] take this knowledge with them onto… whatever they do later in their life," Acuff said.

Mary Laska

Mary Laska, an Acalanes senior and Girl Scout, earned her Gold Award with a documentary project on humans' impact on the environment and responsible steps toward change. After watching several environmental documentaries, Laska felt inspired to share this information with everyone, so they could understand how everyday actions affect the environment.

"I wanted to create this to kind of show younger kids and to introduce them to environmental topics and climate change and basically say that you're never too young to help the environment because you are inheriting the world," Laska said.

Laska included topics such as ugly produce, refrigerants, and other economic problems.

"My project was a documentary about climate change and what people can do to be more eco-friendly. So I talked about carpooling, water conservation, refrigerants, food waste sorting and diet," Laska said.

Those who showed up to Laska's event in

the Lafayette Library found the documentary interesting and learned how to actively help the planet.

"I learned about ways to help the Earth and things that are bad for the Earth, like refrigerants because they leak, and they spill out ... Also, I learned that 50 percent of the world's food is not eaten because of ugly produce," sophomore Maelin Mason said.

Sarah Potter

Sarah Potter is a senior at Acalanes who is currently working towards her Gold Award with a project that addresses the unintentional consequences of using some rat poisons on raptors, such as owls and hawks. Potter's project stemmed from observing the environmental consequences of humans using rat poisons.

"Most people… think they are just protecting their houses from mice and rats, but they don't realize the unintended consequence that ultimately, if we end up poisoning our birds of prey, we will end up with more mice and rats," Marisa Medina said.

Her process involved researching and educating people on how the use of rat and mouse poisons affect other wildlife in the community. She connected with Sustainable Lafayette, a non-profit organization which creates safe havens for owls, and followed up by recruiting a few younger Girl Scouts to help her build owl boxes. In addition, she demonstrated an owl box that she built to the audience at one of Laska's documentary premieres.

"She's just been totally 100 percent on board in terms of emailing people, trying to find the help that she needs, [and] contacting Sustainable Lafayette to get funding for the wood that she needs for the owl boxes," Marisa Medina said.

Furthermore, Potter suggested ways Acalanes can improve their impact on the raptors that live nearby.

"I see a lot of these rat poisons being used around campus, and I'm hoping to talk to Acalanes staff and faculty to see if they will stop using these kinds of poisons and welcome an owl box onto campus," Potter said.

Adriana Medina

Adriana Medina is a senior at Acalanes who connected with Ayers Elementary School in Concord for her Gold Award project, connecting Acalanes students to younger students in need of math and reading support. Adriana observed that there is still a need for younger students to catch up on the learning that they missed during the pandemic, especially those who did not have resources to access school remotely during that time.

"We know specifically that there were students at [Ayers Elementary School] who are not able to access tutoring programs anywhere else, and the school doesn't have the resources to provide outside tutoring programs, so I see a huge need within the elementary school students," Adriana Medina said.

With that root issue in mind, she came up with a plan that she hoped would benefit not only the elementary school students there, but also some high schoolers at Acalanes who had the chance to be tutors.

"It will [allow] high school students [to learn] how to instruct others, which I feel is a pretty valuable skill and having this mentorship opportunity in a low risk situation. I would say [that] tutoring an elementary school is not that difficult, so I feel like in this kind of situation people can build confidence, and we can learn how to properly explain things," Adriana Medina said.

As part of her project, Adriana Medina created a website, Students Helping Students, which allows her to connect many elementary school students with resources. Through the website, Acalanes students of all grades can sign up to tutor students at Ayers on a weekly basis.

"It's all based upon flexibility and accommodation, like the fact that the tutoring program is online [which] opens a lot of doors… when people need tutoring they don't have to travel outside of their home," Adriana Medina said.

Eleni Chatzigeorgiou

Eleni Chatzigeorgiou is another senior at Acalanes who achieved a Gold Award for Girl Scouts for creating a project focused on making girls comfortable in male-dominated fields of study, specifically computer science. Her inspiration for her project stemmed from an experience she had at Acalanes in her computer science class.

"When I took [a Computer Science] class last year at Acalanes, and there were only four girls including me, out of thirty kids. The same thing has happened this year, and I was just confused on why that is, because so many other STEM careers are becoming more equal in terms of gender, but computer science seems to be decreasing in terms of equality," Chatzigeorgiou said.

Following that experience, Catzigeorgiou was determined to understand why girls weren't in the computer science field.

"I came up with a ton of root causes on the internet, and nothing was really a solid root cause, so I went and interviewed some STEM teachers around Acalanes. I decided to focus on the stereotypes that surround computer science, the ones that tend to make computer science seem less appealing to girls," Chatzigeorgiou said.

Beyond the Gold Award, Chatzigeorgiou is dedicating her summer to help young girls in computer science.

"The fact that she's continuing on the project and planning to complete it over the summer even though it's not something that can impact her college admissions or her college applications shows that she's doing it for her and not for anyone else," Marisa Medina said.

Anie Heffernan

Anie Heffernan is a senior at Acalanes who received a Girl Scouts Gold Award. Her project focuses on teaching American Sign Language (ASL) to law enforcement and first responders.

"I learned a lot in those [ASL] classes about the deaf and hard of hearing community and about how there are a lot of struggles that they have that we don't really know about," Heffernan said. "One of the things is that deaf and hard of hearing people, they [can] get shot because officers think that they are not communicating when all it is that they can't hear you, and

Courtesy Photo/Nia Jeyakrishnan

Continued on 17

Asher's Archives

Activism and Assassination: The Life and Death of Harvey Milk

A historical dive into one of the most prominent early gay politicians and his tragic death

Asher Meklin and Ariel Shehter | Staff Writers

In an environment of political turmoil and firsts, 1978 brought about a bloody political event: the first election of an openly gay man to public office in California, and subsequently the first politically-motivated murder on California soil.

Due to the influx of sailors and immigrants entering the port after WWII as well as the comparatively liberal attitudes of its residents, the city of San Francisco emerged as a center of gay culture beginning in the 1950s. Today, it remains the site of one of the largest Pride parades in the nation and the location of the world's first transgender cultural district.

Thus, it is no surprise that the election of one of the first gay men in America took place in San Francisco. However, Harvey Milk's subsequent death and assassination shows that despite the prevalence of liberal attitudes, all was not as progressive as it seemed. This concept of liberal attitudes conflicting with conservative policies is highly relevant today in the wake of bills such as the "Don't Say Gay" bill in Florida, as well as the dozens of bills limiting transgender healthcare that have been emerging in recent months.

In San Francisco, voters determine the positions on the city council through a process where each of the eleven districts elect a representative for the City Board of Supervisors. This configuration shift occurred due to the passage of a redistricting plan dubbed Proposition T in the mid 1970s.

For years, San Francisco was divided into sections based on ethnic and cultural affiliation, a result of both redlining and the subsequent emergence of ethnic and cultural enclaves across the city. One region in particular, the Castro, had a very high gay population due to its citizens' decision to avoid discrimination elsewhere by living in the district.

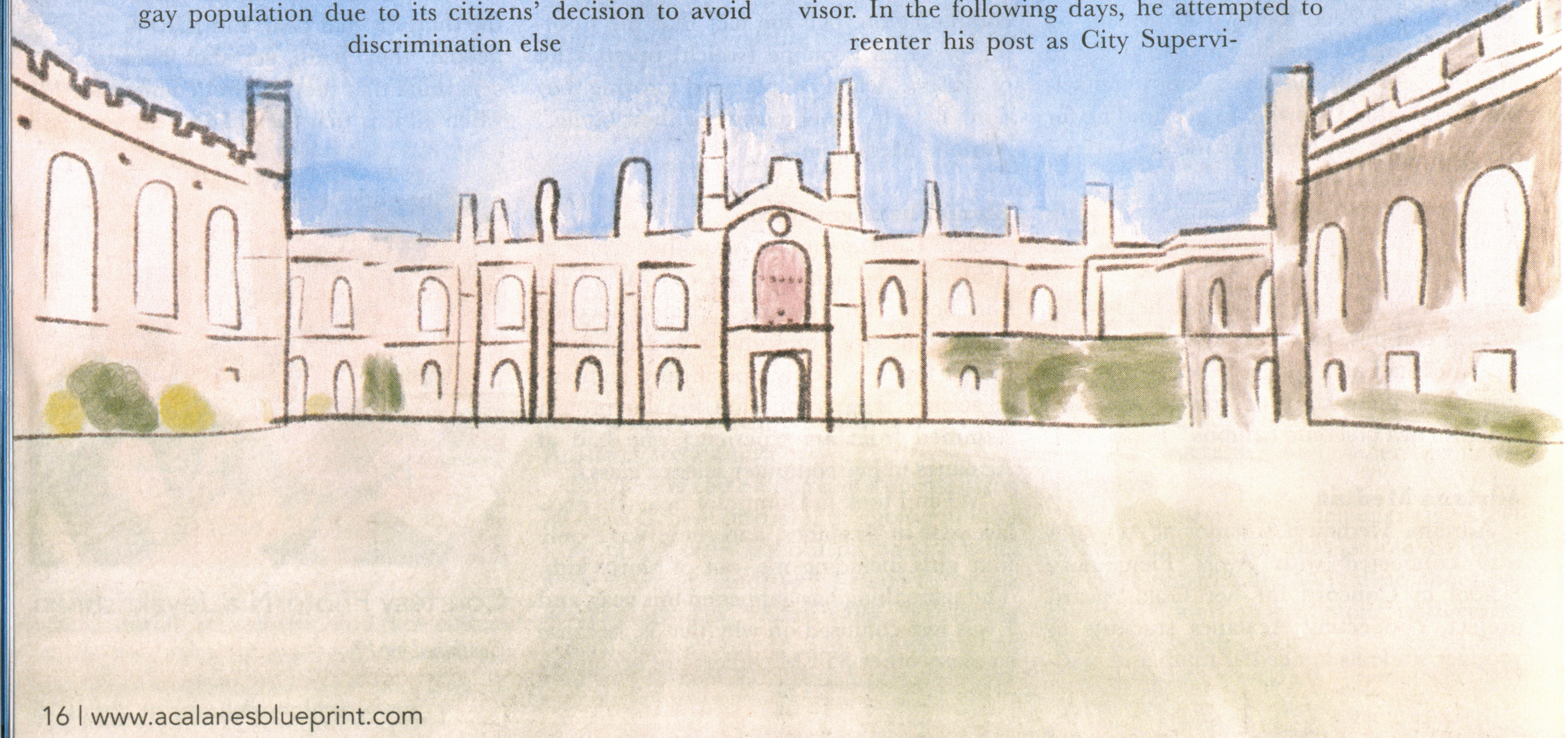
This meant that when the 1977 elections for city supervisor rolled around, the Castro was able to successfully elect the first gay candidate to public office in California, and one of the first to be elected nationwide.

"Milk's election was made possible in part by SF's switch to district-based voting for the Board of Supervisors," Professor of History at San Francisco State University Marc Stein said. "This was favorable for constituencies, including Asian Americans, Latinx people, and LGBT people in SF, that might not have had sufficient population strength to win all-city votes but had the ability to win in specific neighborhoods."

Harvey Milk was raised in a Jewish family in New York state, served in the military during the Korean War. and taught at a school in Long Island before moving to San Francisco in 1969. Just a few years later in 1973, he began his first campaign for city supervisor while styling himself as "the Mayor of Castro Street", an election that he would have won had the city made the changes to its electoral system described above prior to 1973.

He continued to run for election before election regulation changes enabled him to win in 1977, and he took office on Jan. 8 of the following year. However, he would serve only around eleven months of his four-year term.

After a spate of arguments with fellow City Supervisor Dan White, including one based on White's opposition to an anti-discrimination bill related to gay rights in housing and employment, White resigned from his post as City Supervisor. In the following days, he attempted to reenter his post as City Supervi-



sor, only to be denied by then-mayor George Moscone.

In response, on Nov. 27, 1978, White entered San Francisco City Hall and shot Moscone and Milk, due to disagreements over his potential reappointment as well as conflicts with Milk over political disagreements such as the anti-discrimination bill. Consequently, this contributed to a rise of anti-gay sentiment and actions expressed at the time by similar figures including anti-gay activist Anita Bryant.

"Especially at the time, the law wasn't exactly in queer people's favor. Even now, there is still discrimination that runs rampant," senior Ezryn Zupo said. "Gay people have been treated poorly throughout US history and it doesn't surprise me that when [someone] attacked the community there was little to nothing done without community uproar."

Ultimately, White's trial ended in a conviction of manslaughter rather than first degree murder, a verdict that sparked a series of protests and riots that came to be known as the White Night Riots. These riots emerged because the manslaughter verdict was the lightest verdict possible, and carried with it a seven-year prison sentence, of which White only served five.

"There's also a long history of society excusing violence against LGBT people, as occurred when a jury refused to convict Dan White of first degree murder, even though he had intentionally entered City Hall through a window with a loaded gun," Stein said.

Milk was a highly prominent element of the progression of LGBT+ rights of the era, and his assassination brought him ever further into the public consciousness. Prior to his death, Milk recorded a tape to be played in the event of his assassination, which included the phrase:

"If a bullet should enter my brain, let that bullet destroy every closet door."

As bills such as Florida's "Don't Say Gay" bill and other pieces of legislation that reduce LGBT medical rights and representation pass around the country, it becomes crucial to look back at the history in question in order to address these current issues. The life and death of Harvey Milk and the circumstances surrounding it were a major step forward and then, shortly afterward, a step backwards for gay rights at the time.

"[Milk's] assassination by Dan White, who had recently resigned as a fellow member of SF's Board of Supervisors, turned him into a political martyr and a victim of the hateful anti-LGBTQ politics of the New Right," Stein said.

These conservative politics are now having a zombie-like revival with the advent of bills that limit education on LGBT+ topics and limit access to hormone replacement therapy (HRT), which has been proven to lower the risk of transgender youth developing or intensifying mental health conditions.

"All research points to HRT being a massive preventer of suicide... Even if it's not intentional murder, it's gross negligence, and it's going to lead to many deaths," sophomore Sparrow Springfield said.

In order to meaningfully progress in the struggle for LGBT+ rights, it is crucial to see the past in its fullness, especially within such a diverse and historical area as the one we live in.

"We are very lucky to be in California, especially a state that isn't going to outright neglect their queer [residents]," Springfield said.

And in order to drive home that progress, the fundamental "golden rule" of innovation can be summed up into one word: solidarity.

"I stood for more than just a candidate, I have never considered myself a candidate." Milk said on his final tape recording. "I have always considered myself part of a movement... I wish I had time to explain...everything that was done with eyes on the gay movement."

Girl Scouts Gold Awards

Continued from 15

they don't know what you're saying."

After finding that law enforcement and first responders were interested in learning ASL, Heffernan created a form for the responders and enforcers to identify the most common terms they use in their line of work.

"I decided that I wanted to make a video with a bunch of terms, so then I had to figure out what terms were going to be in those videos, and so I sent out Google Forms to some law enforcement and first responders and nurses ... and they gave me some terms, and then I made another Google Form with how important each of these terms were," Heffernan said.

After completing this project, Heffernan feels relieved and accomplished with how her work can help others succeed and benefit from it.

"It was really great when I had the completed video and seeing it and seeing how much work I'd put in and how much work I'd done and realizing that this is going to help a lot of people," Heffernan said.

Nia Jeyakrishnan

Nia Jeyakrishnan is an Acalanes senior who achieved the Gold Award status this school year. For her project, Nia spent two weeks in the Indian city of Chennai this past winter. There, she worked with the Spastic Society of Tamil Nadu (SPASTN), a school for disabled children and Thuli, and secondhand clothing organization. With the help of teachers and parents at the society, she taught the teenagers how to turn second hand clothing into reusable bags, which the teenagers sold to others.

"I'm really hoping that it gives some amount of income to the families because a lot of the parents of the disabled kids aren't able to work because they have to take care of the kids. It's a full time commitment [for them], so I'm hoping that it supports the families a little bit," Jeyakrishnan said.

Jeyakrishnan's idea came from her first-hand experience living in Chennai and the poverty she witnessed there.

"When I had the opportunity to do my Gold Award, I definitely knew that I wanted to give back to that community and I wanted to combat the kind of cycle that being disabled in India brings, because when you are disabled, especially in India, it's a lot more likely that you're going to end up in poverty," Jeyakrishnan said.

Her project will continue to benefit both the environment and the community of Chennai. Jeyakrishnan and her team have received multiple orders for the reusable bags, the largest order being 5000 bags, from the rotary foundation.

"It was incredibly successful, I think they got orders from thousands of bags, so I think the idea was that it could create a sustainable income revenue to support [this cause]," Marisa Medina said.

Blueprint's Collegiate Corner: Summer College Preparation Tips

An in-depth look at what students can do to prepare for college during the summer

Jenna Kessler | Business and Community Outreach Team Member

College admissions can be a stressful and confusing process for students. Blueprint's Collegiate Corner aims to help students navigate the process with a focus of what they can do during the summer to support their college goals.

Students are not required to do any of the activities below, and should spend their time as they choose to over the summer. The activities below are simply suggestions to further develop one's college application.

College Classes

Taking classes at college during the summer is a wonderful opportunity to explore a student's interests. While some students may think that willingly going to school during the summer is outrageous, many enjoy these classes, especially because they can choose what they learn.

"Community college is an excellent, cost-efficient option for higher education ... Community college classes are an amazing opportunity to keep engaged academically during the summer months, express academic rigor and particular passions for college admissions, and properly prepare for the rigor of AP classes," sophomore Julia Kinion said.

Many colleges offer summer education programs for high schoolers, and a significant portion of them are free, including those at Diablo Valley College in Concord. However, most programs require application and enrollment months in advance.

"To take class over the summer, students need to apply and enroll to the college or other institution and submit the concurrent enrollment paperwork. Your counselor can help with this. This is an inexpensive way to explore a topic of interest," Martin said.

Extracurriculars

The term 'extracurricular' encompasses a large variety of activities, and there is something for every student.

"Extracurricular activities are anything a student does outside of school. These include sports, music, classes, hobbies, volunteer service, a job, travel, [etc.]," Counselor Susan Martin said.

Many colleges value participation in extracurricular activities. Showing interest in organizations and activities outside of school may help a student stand out to admissions officers.

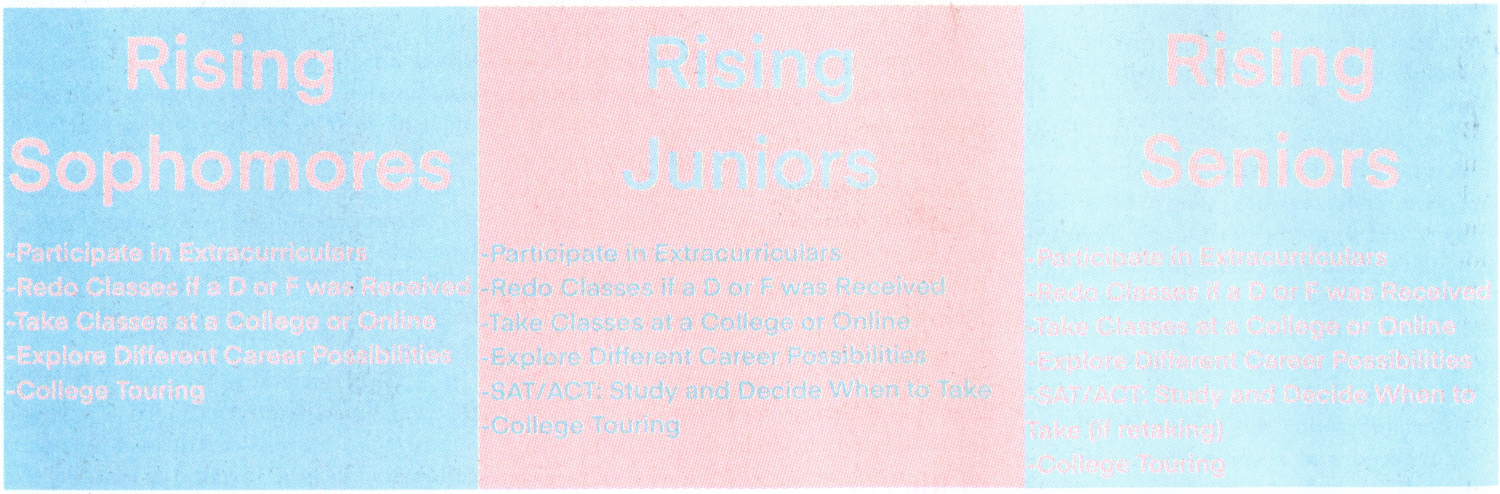
"Sports, clubs, and volunteering are important because they reveal who you are as a person, what interests you, and what core values you hold. Extracurriculars also have value beyond college admissions as they can help you develop essential life skills such as collaboration, public speaking, [and] organization," Kinion said.

Colleges do not look for or require students to participate in specific extracurriculars. However, if a student has a major that they want to pursue, they should consider participating in extracurriculars related to that major.

"It is helpful to have an extracurricular activity or two related to your possible future major in college. For example, if you are considering majoring in journalism or English, then writing for Blueprint would be a good activity to add to your extracurricular activities list," Acalanes College and Career Center Assistant Sara Bretthauer said.

Naviance

Naviance is a website that can help students navigate the college admissions process in many different ways.



Rising Sophomores	Rising Juniors	Rising Seniors
-Participate in Extracurriculars -Redo Classes if a D or F was Received -Take Classes at a College or Online -Explore Different Career Possibilities -College Touring	-Participate in Extracurriculars -Redo Classes if a D or F was Received -Take Classes at a College or Online -Explore Different Career Possibilities -SAT/ACT: Study and Decide When to Take -College Touring	-Participate in Extracurriculars -Redo Classes if a D or F was Received -Take Classes at a College or Online -Explore Different Career Possibilities -SAT/ACT: Study and Decide When to Take (if retaking) -College Touring

Blueprint Graphic/Justin Rosenblatt

"Naviance is a tool which helps students research and explore universities. They can also look at majors and acceptance rates. In particular, many students find Naviance to be an interesting tool to explore Scattergrams, which show acceptances for Acalanes students over the last several years based on their GPA and SAT or ACT score," Acalanes College and Career Center Advisor Debbie Levy said.

Within Naviance, there are many different programs, pages, and resources to support students during their college process.

"[Some Naviance functions include the] My Planner Tab: set academic and personal goals and track deadlines, test dates, and other parts of the application process; About Me Tab: take surveys, create a resume, view your test scores and GPA," Bretthauer said. "Colleges Tab: research colleges and scholarships, review scattergrams with AHS-specific data; Careers Tab: complete personality and interests assessments, research careers, build your favorite career list."

Standardized Testing: SAT or ACT

While many colleges do not require test scores, if a student believes their test score adds value to their application, they should consider taking one of them.

"[To test or not] is up to the student and what colleges they plan to apply to. More and more colleges are going to Test Optional [meaning] you can send SAT or ACT scores if you feel the scores will benefit your application or Test Blind [where] they will not look at your scores even if you send them," Bretthauer said. "If you are able to take an official SAT or ACT test, it is good to have a score in case you decide to apply to a university that is now requiring test scores."

Both the SAT and ACT are relatively similar with a few key differences, and colleges do not prefer one over the other. Students should take the test that they feel more comfortable taking.

"The SAT [is] three hours and 15 minutes [long], [has a] total of 400-1600 points [and has] fewer geometry questions, more time per question, and a no-calculator math section. The ACT [is] two hours and 55 minutes overall time, [has a] total of 1-36 points, [has] lots of geometry, [is] faster paced, and includes a science section. Colleges do not prefer one test over the other," Bretthauer said.

Taking both an official practice SAT and ACT test can help students decide which one to take. This summer, students can decide if they want to take these tests and if so, plan out when they would like to take them.

"I recommend students take a practice SAT test and a practice ACT test. Whichever one you did better on and preferred, then that is the one to focus on moving forward," Bretthauer said.

Redoing Classes That Students Received a D or F in

Students who received a D or F in any of their classes have the opportunity to earn a better grade in the class during the summer, either in-person or online.

"The first and most popular way to remediate D/F grades is to take the class during summer school. The Acalanes Union High School District offers a summer school program every year. This year it is at [Acalanes]," Martin said. "Students can [also] remediate a class online during the school year through Intersession."

While students have to redo any required classes in which they receive a failing grade, counselors recommend that they also retake any classes in that they received a D in.

"It is important for students to remediate classes in which they earned an F grade so they can meet graduation requirements and earn their diploma. If the class is required for graduation, this must be done," Martin said. "In the case of a D grade, students don't have to remediate these classes - a D is a passing grade, and will earn a student a diploma. However, a D grade is usually not accepted by many colleges."

For more information or to discuss retaking classes, students can reach out to their counselors.

Other Resources

For college essays, the number one recommended resource is the College Essay Guy, which has numerous resources for students to utilize.

"On the Acalanes College and Career website, there is a plethora of free resources to help kick start the essay process. A free resource by the College Essay Guy that offers numerous opportunities for students to start brainstorming and thinking about what they might want to share about their values and experiences for the college essay," Levy said.

Students have an expansive collection of free college resources available to them when they need it.

"We have a whole College and Career Center on the [Acalanes] campus dedicated to helping our students plan for life after high school. Ms. Levy and her team do great work with our students … Students can get information about jobs, internships and scholarships in the College and Career Center as well … [Naviance] is a website that allows students to research colleges, careers, and their own interests. Each student has a login, and can start using Naviance immediately for research," Martin said.

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The Outcome of the Overturn

Exploring the national and local impacts in the year following the Supreme Court's overturn of Roe v. Wade

Jacqueline Kuhner, Melina Nath, Finley Reid, Maya Agarwal, Haley Chelemedos, Grace Gallacher and Robin Parmelee | Print Editors-In-Chief, Print Head Section Editor, Print Feature Editors, Opinion Copy Editor, Staff Writer

Due to the sensitive nature of this topic, some students chose to remain anonymous. They are quoted as Anonymous Student 1 and Anonymous Student 2.

As various states pass legislation limiting or preventing abortion access in the wake of Roe v. Wade's overturn on June 24, 2022, medical professionals, courts, and citizens examine the future of abortion rights on a national and local level.

The Overturn of *Roe v. Wade*

The 1973 Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade* established the right to an abortion across the country. However, some states challenged *Roe v. Wade* prior to its eventual overturn. On Sept. 1, 2021, the Texas Heartbeat Act prohibited abortion after a six-week period within the state.

"I was flying to Texas [to provide procedures] prior to 2020, and then with the changes of the laws in Texas, before the overturn of Roe, I could no longer provide services in Texas. That was extremely significant in terms of patient care," Family physician and Training in Early Abortion for Comprehensive Healthcare (TEACH) Fellowship Director Dr. Sarah McNeil said.

Before the overturn of *Roe v. Wade,* The state of Mississippi also put restrictions on abortions after a 15-week period. Jackson Women's Health Organization, an abortion clinic in Mississippi, attempted to challenge this state policy with the help of the Center for Reproductive Rights. Eventually, the case rose to the Supreme Court.

On June 24, 2022, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* overturned *Roe v. Wade*, granting states the power to dictate abortion rights. Since *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, many states have passed legislation restricting access to abortion care.

For more information on abortion rights by state, refer to the map on page 22.

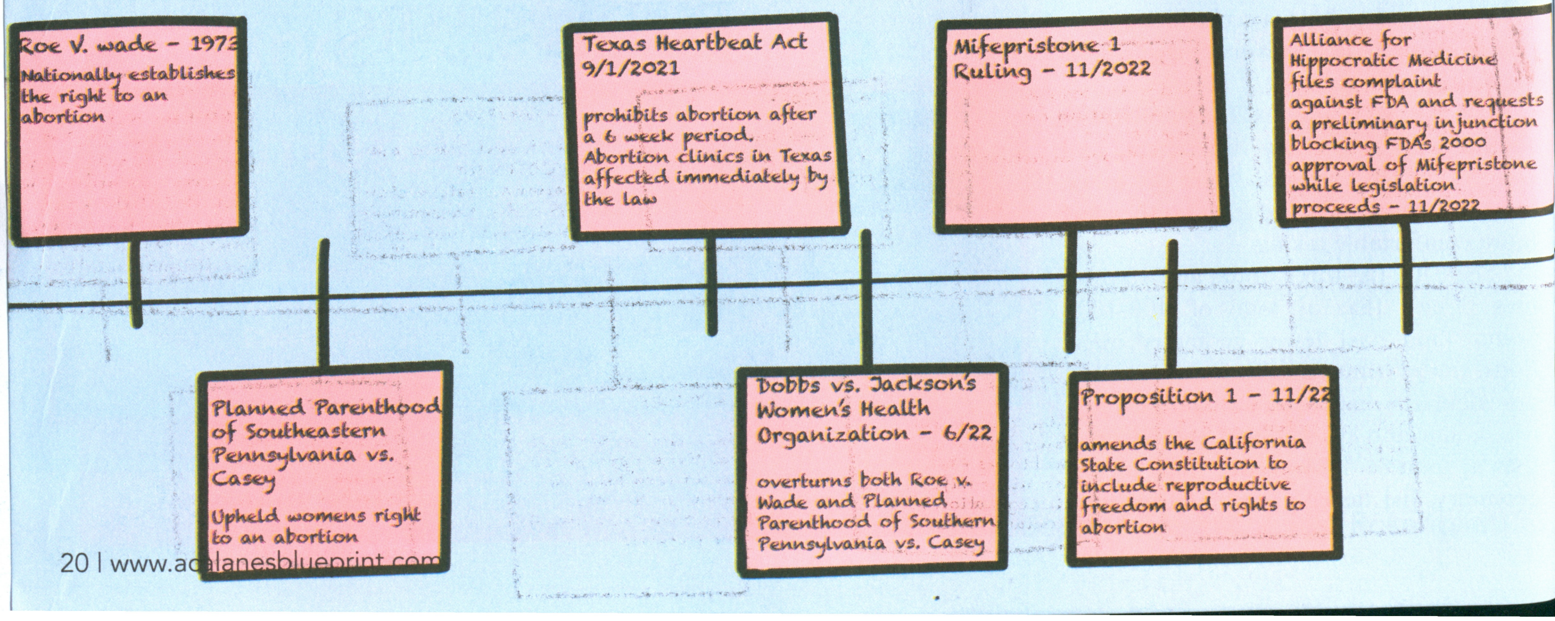
In reaction to the overturn, new legal cases attempt to limit abortion care nationwide, specifically the distribution of medical abortion pills. *Hippocratic Medicine v. U.S. Food and Drug Administration* (FDA) is an ongoing case regarding the restriction of Mifepristone, a pill used in medical abortions. Hippocratic Medicine filed the original case against the FDA-approved Mifepristone drug on Nov. 11, 2022. The case rose to a federal appeal court in Texas, meaning the court's decision would impact the rest of the country.

"There was a group, [Hippocratic Medicine], [who is] anti-abortion ... The [lawsuit] that they filed is that [with] this medication abortion pill, [the] FDA did not go through all the measures to make it safe. [However], it's been used in our country for 20 years and longer in other parts of the world ... If it became illegal, we wouldn't be able to prescribe the medication abortion pill," California State University Fullerton Staff Nurse Practitioner Melissa Fassbinder said.

On April 7, 2023, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas, Amarillo, overturned the FDA approval of Mifepristone. Federal judge Matthew J. Kacsmaryk led the historical ruling, the first court decision to directly challenge the integrity of the FDA.

Shortly after the ruling, people across the nation disputed the authority of the decision. Some questioned Judge Kacsmaryk's conservative and non-medical background, leading to concerns over the implications of the case nationwide.

"From an abortion standpoint, it would primarily decrease the way in which we provide abortions ... [Additionally, the Mifepristone ruling] could have pretty large implications because it's relatively unprecedented. It could mean that [the FDA] would open up for other lawsuits.



Roe V. wade - 1973
Nationally establishes the right to an abortion

Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania vs. Casey
Upheld womens right to an abortion

Texas Heartbeat Act 9/1/2021
prohibits abortion after a 6 week period. Abortion clinics in Texas affected immediately by the law

Dobbs vs. Jackson's Women's Health Organization - 6/22
overturns both Roe v. Wade and Planned Parenthood of Southern Pennsylvania vs. Casey

Mifepristone 1 Ruling - 11/2022

Proposition 1 - 11/22
amends the California State Constitution to include reproductive freedom and rights to abortion

Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine files complaint against FDA and requests a preliminary injunction blocking FDA's 2000 approval of Mifepristone while legislation proceeds - 11/2022

[Political authorities could] try to challenge FDA approval of other medications or vaccines," John Muir Health Core Faculty Physician Dr. Rachel Oliver said.

> **"My plan is to continue to provide the best care for patients based on the evidence and not based on what judges are deciding, which is not within the purview. Just like I am hesitant to explain how [lawyers and judges] do their work, I think they should be very hesitant to explain how I do my job," Dr. McNeil said.**

Hippocratic Medicine v. U.S. Food and Drug Administration currently awaits a decision in the Supreme Court. Medical and political figures are trying to decipher the gray area in which courts have the ability to intervene in the medical field.

"What we want to continue to do as clinicians is to provide the best evidence-based care for patients that is safe and effective, and that includes the use of Mifepristone in medication abortion," Dr. McNeil said. "So with the protections of California clinically, my plan is to continue to provide the best care for patients based on the evidence and not based on what judges are deciding, which is not within the purview. Just like I am hesitant to explain how [lawyers and judges] do their work, I think they should be very hesitant to explain how I do my job."

For many, the recent abortion decisions concerned not only abortion access but also the balance between state governments and federal power.

"I really wonder whether or not the Supreme Court will change drastically because people are seeing that the Supreme Court is not upholding all citizens' rights and by giving power back to the states there's more division that seems to be occurring," English and Social Studies teacher James Muñoz said.

Abortion Rights in California

Though ruling against Mifepristone in *Hippocratic Medicine v. U.S. Food and Drug Administration* would eliminate access to the drug in California, California's recent state rulings are favorable for individuals seeking ongoing access to abortion. In Nov. 2022, California amended its state constitution with Proposition 1, which reaffirms individual rights to reproductive freedom.

"In a state like California, which has voted to have in the state constitution protections for abortion, it means that unless something else were to happen at the federal level, the right to abortion care would remain protected in California," Dr. Oliver said.

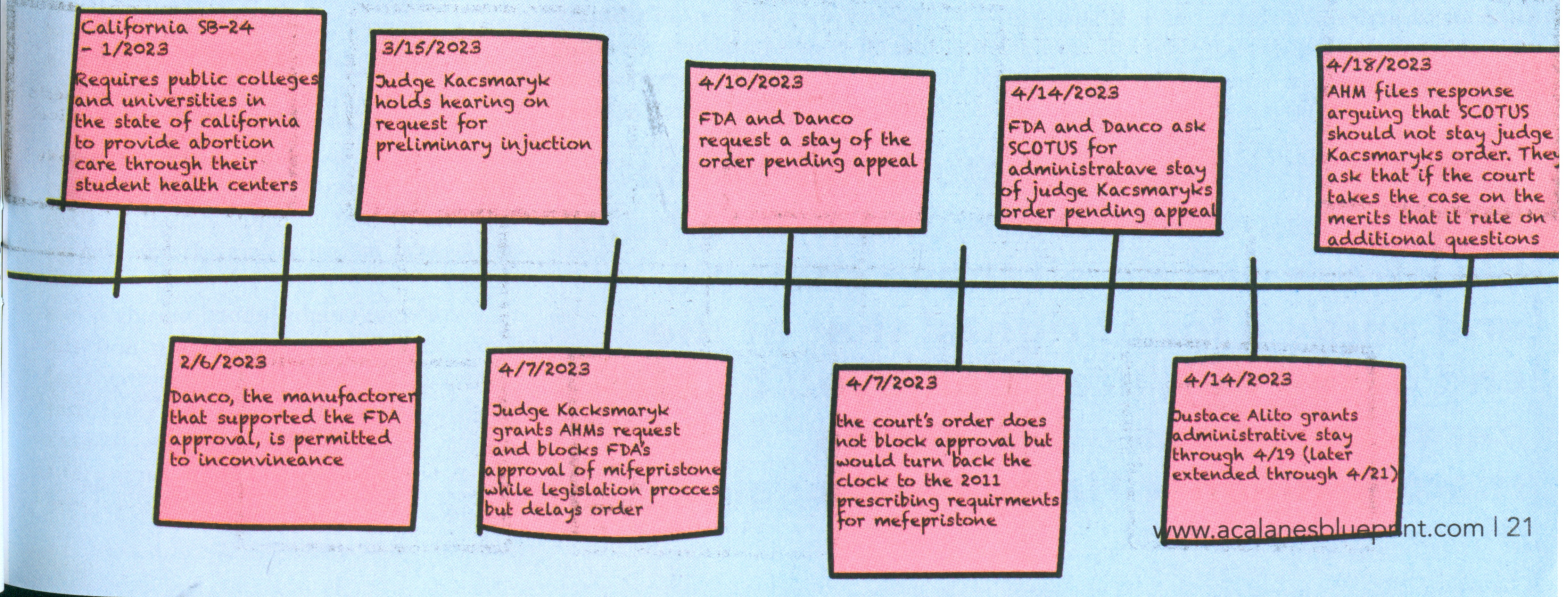
Additionally, in Jan. 2023, California SB-24 required all public colleges and universities to provide abortion resources through their respective student health centers.

"[When] a student is pregnant, [California State University Fullerton Student Health Center] actually provides all the pregnancy counseling options. We talk about options [for] pregnancy, adoption, and also termination," Fassbinder said. "If [a college or university] does not have the capacity to provide a [specific abortion] service, they have contracts or services with the local clinics, such as Planned Parenthood."

California's protection of abortion rights could attract an influx of people seeking abortion care. The University of California, Los Angeles, (UCLA) School of Law and Center on Reproductive Health, Law, and Policy conducted a study in June 2022 concluding that the number of out-of-state residents traveling to California will increase as more legislative restrictions and bans on abortion occur in other states. The study estimates that approximately 10,600 more people will come to California each year, or in other words, 900 additional people seeking medical attention per month. UCLA also predicts these numbers will adjust as abortion rights shift over time.

Depending on state restrictions, there may also be legal ramifications for people who seek or receive an abortion out-of-state.

"Lots of people are worried, and we are worried, for patient safety. If [a patient normally goes] to a doctor in Texas, who [does not] believe in abortion, and [the doctor] saw in the patient's chart that they got an abortion in California, then it is possible that that doctor in Texas could report the patient to the police," Dr. Mc-



California SB-24 - 1/2023
Requires public colleges and universities in the state of california to provide abortion care through their student health centers

2/6/2023
Danco, the manufactorer that supported the FDA approval, is permitted to inconvineance

3/15/2023
Judge Kacsmaryk holds hearing on request for preliminary injuction

4/7/2023
Judge Kacksmaryk grants AHMs request and blocks FDA's approval of mifepristone while legislation procces but delays order

4/10/2023
FDA and Danco request a stay of the order pending appeal

4/7/2023
the court's order does not block approval but would turn back the clock to the 2011 prescribing requirments for mefepristone

4/14/2023
FDA and Danco ask SCOTUS for administratave stay of judge Kacsmaryks order pending appeal

4/14/2023
Justace Alito grants administrative stay through 4/19 (later extended through 4/21)

4/18/2023
AHM files response arguing that SCOTUS should not stay judge Kacsmaryks order. They ask that if the court takes the case on the merits that it rule on additional questions

Neil said.

Furthermore, low-wage workers residing in states with limited access to or no abortion care face barriers with travel expenses and long-term economic consequences of work leave.

According to the 2014 Guttmacher Institute study *Characteristics of U.S. Abortion Patients in 2014 and Changes since 2008*, 75 percent of women who seek or receive an abortion have a family income below the federal poverty level. Hence, low-income persons or families often find out-of-state abortion care inaccessible.

"More than 50 percent of women who have abortions have children at home already. So they often need to manage their child care, they need to ... take time off, [and] they need to be able to afford a ticket, a rental car, [or] gas. The majority of people who identify as women in the U.S. do not have access to those funds," Dr. McNeil said.

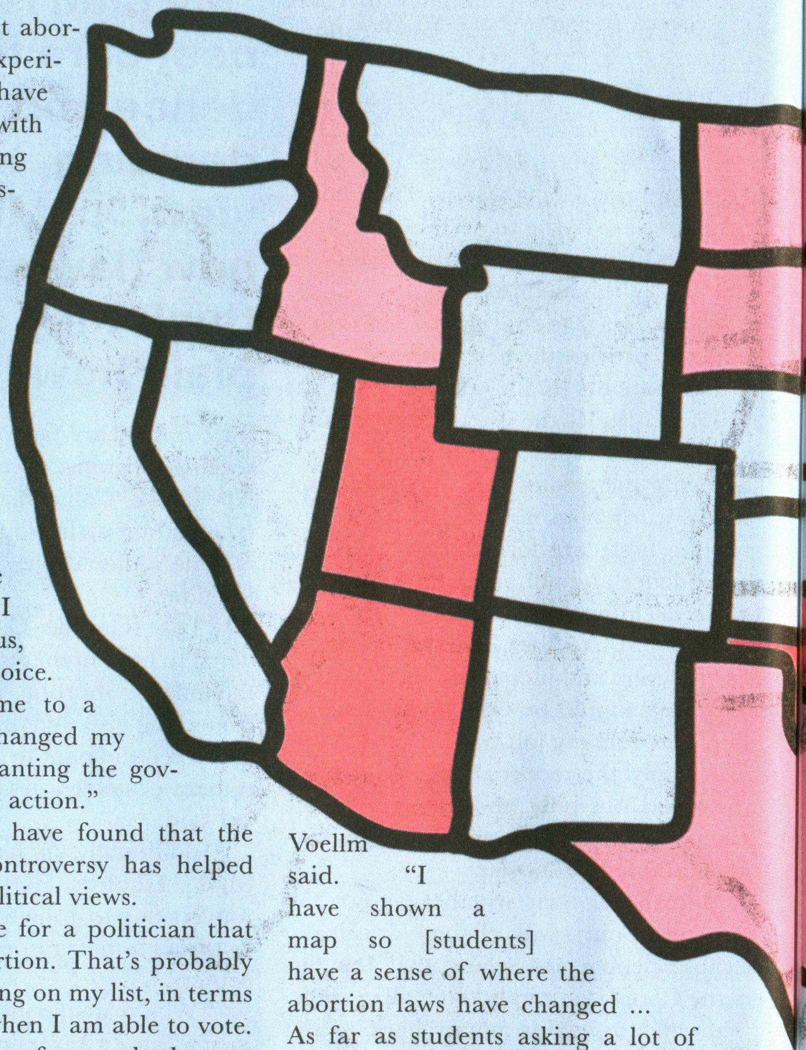
Local Discussions and Education

Due to California's statewide protections, such as those in Proposition 1, local conversations surrounding concerns over abortion protections are often less frequent. On the Acalanes campus, staff notes that discussions and questions about the landscape of abortion rights are limited among students.

"I think this impacts students in that sometimes we operate under this bubble of 'we can do all these things ... and enjoy a lot of rights' that at the end of the day, aren't enjoyed by students in various other states. That's alarming, and it sheds light to the rights [one gets] to enjoy as a Californian. [Students should] allow for greater discussion of what's happening in the United States as a whole," U.S. History teacher Haley Walsh said.

Students agree that conversations with their peers about the debate are uncommon.

"I stand against abortion ... [In] my experiences trying to have a conversation with other left-leaning people in my classes, they usually shut me down and call me a woman-hater without even hearing what I have to say," Anonymous Student 1 at Acalanes said. "I've only actually had a real conversation with one of my friends, who I will keep anonymous, but he was Pro-choice. Eventually we came to a consensus and I changed my view away from wanting the government to ban the action."



Other students have found that the recent abortion controversy has helped them form their political views.

"I wouldn't vote for a politician that stands against abortion. That's probably the number one thing on my list, in terms of in a few years, when I am able to vote. I'm not going to vote for people that are restricting women's rights," sophomore Nick Owens said.

In Acalanes' classrooms, some Human and Social Development (HSD) teachers have established a few minor alterations to their class conversations to accommodate for new abortion restrictions in other states.

"We've always discussed the California State laws around abortion and abortion access, and still do. That is the primary lesson. But of course, now we describe, 'well, if you're living in another state, the rules might vary,'" HSD teacher Monika Voellm said. "I have shown a map so [students] have a sense of where the abortion laws have changed ... As far as students asking a lot of questions, their questions have not really been different [than in previous years]. I'm not sure why. It could be that because for California, the status quo is the same, where[as] in other states it is very different."

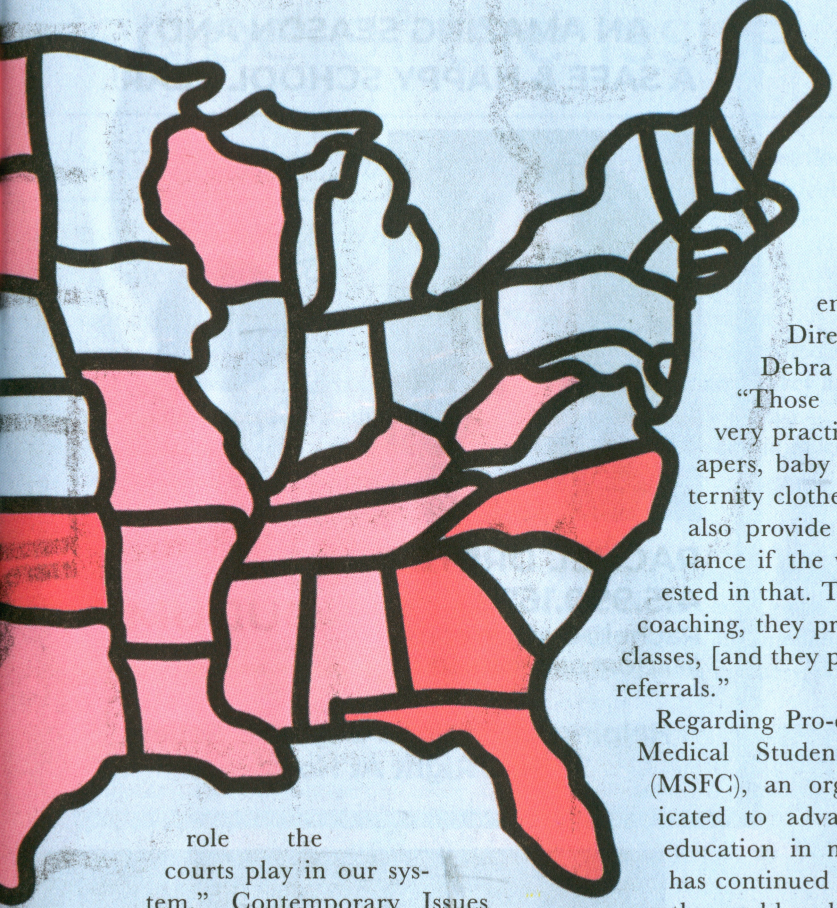
Some find that the HSD class allows an opportunity to speak and learn about abortion in a supportive environment.

"I think learning about abortions in a class like HSD is a good thing because it opens up good conversations. Learning about abortions in a school setting is a good way to get new perspectives," sophomore Kate Roberts said.

Outside of HSD, other educators are adapting their curriculum to include the effects of recent abortion legislation such as *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*.

"I've always taught [abortion rights] less about abortion but more about how the Supreme Court works, ... [including the] way they make decisions, and what that means ... I think [*Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*] is a really important case to look at ... because [it shows] the

> **"I think this impacts students in that sometimes we operate under this bubble of 'we can do all these things ... and enjoy a lot of rights' that at the end of the day, aren't enjoyed by students in various other states," U.S. History teacher Haley Walsh said.**



role the courts play in our system," Contemporary Issues and U.S. History teacher Brian Smith said.

In contrast to discussions at Acalanes, at some out-of-state private schools, conversations about abortion occur through a religious lens.

"My school still prays for the end of abortion regularly and occasionally speaks about it," Anonymous Student 2 at Sacred Heart Academy in Michigan said.

Beyond conversations in high school, the issue of abortion protections has factored into students' college search.

"Abortion laws in other states absolutely influenced my college decision. When I was college searching, I knew that I didn't want to attend a college in a state that had laws that prevented me from having access to abortion resources. I didn't even consider colleges in states with abortion bans or severe limits," senior Nora Macarewich said.

Organizations and Activism

In the face of new legislation, citizens and larger organizations from both sides of the issue are working to provide medical support to families in need.

"Pro-Life Action Ministries (PLAM) itself has a financial aid fund for pregnant women," Education Director at PLAM Debra Braun said. "Those centers provide very practical help like diapers, baby items, and maternity clothes ... Then, they also provide adoption assistance if the woman is interested in that. They provide life coaching, they provide parenting classes, [and they provide] housing referrals."

Regarding Pro-choice activism, Medical Students for Choice (MSFC), an organization dedicated to advancing abortion education in medical schools, has continued its work around the world and throughout the United States.

"When I went to medical school, Medical Students for Choice was a really incredible organization [that taught me about] the difficulty of providing ... abortion services, because providers [were] not available to [complete] the abortion [procedure]. And so, I [was] presented data around the importance of going to a program that has abortion training as part of your residency," Dr. McNeil said.

Along with MSFC, the TEACH program also provides reproductive healthcare education for clinicians. Dr. McNeil co-founded TEACH's advanced training and leadership program and currently resides as their Fellowship Director.

"The TEACH program ... [works] on integrating abortion care into all of the family medicine training that was happening. I was super lucky to go through that kind of residency for that training ... and learn a lot in terms of hands on skills and advocacy for ... patient care," Dr. McNeil said.

Additionally, students have participated in protests to demonstrate their support for both protection and restriction of abortion policies.

"I would describe the March for Life (a Pro-Life march) as a means to make a statement on the importance and extreme value of all life in the womb from the time of conception," Anonymous Student 2 said. "There is a rally where some speakers will give speeches and there's music as well. Then we march in D.C. for a few hours just carrying signs and we will occasionally pray or sing."

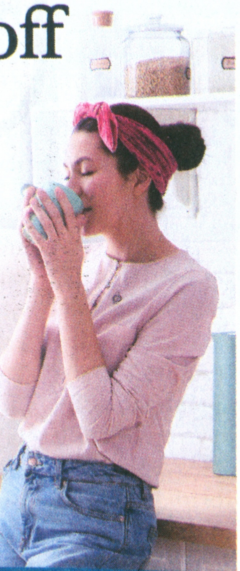
Other students have hosted dialogues about abortion rights to take action within their school community.

"We have [had conversations in Feminist Club]. Especially when the [*Roe v. Wade*] case was being revisited, we talked a lot about it in our meetings," Acalanes Feminism Club President and senior Sofie Foster said.

As the outcome of *Hippocratic Medicine v. U.S. Food and Drug Administration* remains undecided, students recognize the value of educating themselves on the ongoing abortion debates.

"I would hope that people with differing [opinions] could respect each other," Roberts said. "I think I can get more involved by reading more into the abortion debate. By educating myself, I can know more people who have differing views than mine. I can try to go into things with a more open mind, [and] I can [be involved] in more conversations on abortion."

Scan the QR code for an exclusive interview with Congressman Mark DeSaulnier on abortion legislation on Blueprint Online



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OPENING DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY...

Recipe of the Issue

Deconstructed key lime pie

Griffin Ruebner and Zach Snyder | Staff Writers

As spring approaches and the summer heat begins to emerge, a refreshing and simple treat is all you need. This deconstructed key lime pie combines a crunch from the graham cracker and oat crust, with a rich, smooth filling. The citrus and mint complete the dessert, tying together the colors and flavors of spring.

Ingredients:

Crumble

4 graham crackers
¾ cups rolled oats
⅓ cups packed light brown sugar
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
6 tablespoons cold butter, cubed

Mousse

1 ½ cups heavy cream
¼ cup powdered sugar
1 cup sweetened condensed milk
⅓ cup freshly squeezed key lime juice
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Key lime wedges and mint leaves to garnish

Directions:

Crumble

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. In a food processor, pulse graham crackers into fine crumbs. In a medium bowl, combine crushed graham crackers, oats, brown sugar, and flour.

Scan this QR code for a recipe video from Blueprint Online

3. Add butter to the mixture and use your hands to combine until it begins to form pea-sized clumps.
4. Spread mixture into an even layer on a baking sheet. Bake until golden and crisp, about 20 minutes, stirring halfway through. Let cool.

Mousse

1. In a large bowl, using a hand mixer (or in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment), beat cream and powdered sugar into stiff peaks. Remove about 1 cup of whipped cream to reserve for topping.
2. In a medium bowl, combine condensed milk, lime juice, and vanilla. Add to the bowl of whipped cream. Gently fold in until combined.

Assembly

1. Add about ¼ cup of crumble to the bottom of 4 glasses. Top with two large spoonfuls of mousse, then repeat with another layer of crumble and mousse.
2. Add a spoonful of the remaining whipped cream to the top. Top with any remaining crumble and a lime wedge in each glass.
3. We highly recommend you cool before serving! Enjoy!

Blueprint Photo/Griffin Ruebner and Zach Snyder

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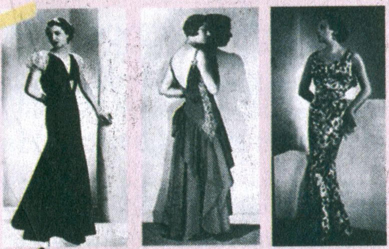
LA MODE: PROM THROUGH THE DECADES

TAKE A DIVE INTO THE PAST WITH THIS TIMELINE OF PROM ATTIRE

BY AYA O'NEAL, TAYLOR DAGGS, AND JEMMA TERAN | ARTS COPY EDITOR, BLUEPRINT COORDINATOR, AND STAFF WRITER

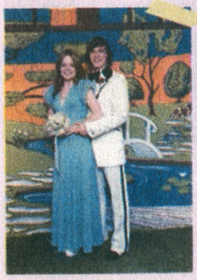
The 1930s were all about classic, timeless sophistication. Hollywood-inspired fashion with a strong Art Deco influence resulted in velvet fabrics and double breasted suits. Emerging from the Great Depression in the later half of the decade, most of the styles during this time included somber colors such as navy, emerald green, and black.

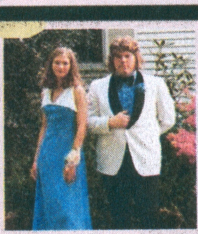


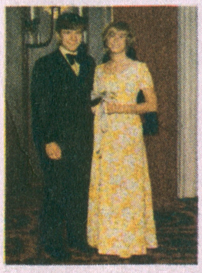
30s

The 1940s prom scene was heavily influenced by World War II. Fabric rations resulted in homemade dresses typically fashioned from old fabric, and full skits were replaced with more practical pencil skirts. Men would often wear their uniforms to the event. Despite challenges, fashion was still popular and garnered inspiration from the Victorian era. Dresses had poofy shoulders and styles reminiscent of the movie "Gone With the Wind."

40s







In the 1970s, bohemian-inspired fashion with floaty synthetics were all the rage. Eyelet lace, off-the-shoulder dresses, and belts revealed a more summery and casual style. Sheer long sleeves and high necklines added a touch of elegance, while mens colored suits with wide lapels and ruffled collars paid homage to the Beatles.

70s

Ruffles and metallics and tulle, oh my! The disco influence was still felt in the 1980s with crimped hair, big bows, and satin Minnie Mouse pumps. Jewel tones were popular, and matching with your date was a must. By the mid-1980s, tulle was back and bigger than ever as highlighted in polka dot tulle and short pouf dresses. Men's fashion was all about hair gel, pleats, suspenders, banker stripes, and pinstripes.

80s

The 2010s included lots of cobalt blue and bright red. High waistlines with flowy skirts were the most popular style, along with flowy fabrics. Other popular features included beading, ruched necklines, bejeweled bodices, and side cutouts, all of which added a touch of sparkle and fun to the dresses. Men's suits moved towards more formal and slim fitting styles.

2010s

So far we have seen a rise in popularity of silk and satin slip dresses. We have also seen vintage dresses making a comeback through thrifting. With that being said, the 2020s are a decade of individuality. What might prom look like this decade? Let's wait and see.

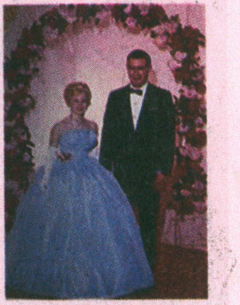
2020s

50s

The post-war economic boom of the 1950s ushered in a new sense of extravagance by way of an obsession for intricate detail. Tea length dresses with ruffles, full skirts, tight bodices, and tulle adorned with sashes, shawls, and intricate detailing were all the rage. Elbow-length satin gloves and chunky pearls completed many looks. Men wore loose monochromatic black suits with white shirts and pocket squares.

60s

Pass the hairspray! The 1960s were all about extravagant beehives and puffy hair. In addition, bubble hems and empire waistlines became shorter and raised. Modest pastel shades gave way to bold colors, and tulle was no longer in style.



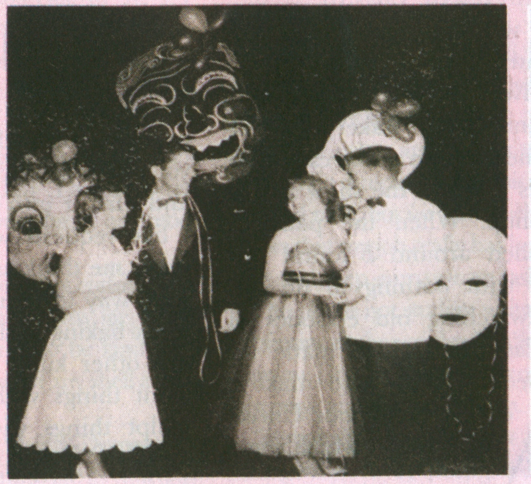
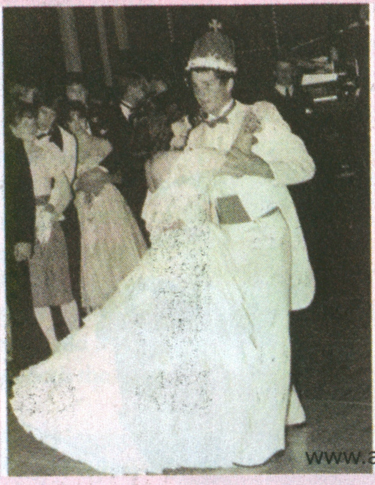
90s

The 1990s were a decade of bold and experimental prom dress styles. Men's styles ranged from casual looks without jackets to full-out monochrome tuxedos. Shoulder pads were popular for a strong, confident look, while off-the-shoulder and spaghetti strap dresses showed off a little skin. Long satin dresses with rosette accents were favored for a romantic, glamorous look. Black and white color schemes were also a trend, reflecting the decade's transition towards minimalism and understated elegance.

2000s

The 2000s were all about elegance with a dramatic touch. This was achieved using corset backs for dramatic fitted silhouettes, rhinestone brooches, and tiered dresses. Aqua, chartreuse, and pink color palettes dominated the decade while animal prints, asymmetrical straps, and two piece styles added a touch of edginess to dresses. In the late 2000s, the classic princess dress made a comeback, giving prom-goers a chance to feel like royalty on their special night.

ACALANES PROM PHOTOS

Photos from Vintage Everyday, Variety, Elle, Seventeen Magazine, and Reformation

Artists of the Issue: Culinary Edition

Getting to know artists Aura Riegel and Ethan Goddard

Nastia Grits and Zinnia Khan | Graphics Member and Print Opinion Editor

Courtesy Photo: Aura Riegel

The soft waft of spices and freshly grilled vegetables circulates the room while a figure stirs a sizzling pan. On the other side of town, cake batter slushes against a bowl as a hand briskly mixes chocolate chunks and vanilla cream. *Blueprint* is proud to feature these two talented Acalanes artists: Aura Riegel and Ethan Goddard.

Aura Riegel

Senior Aura Riegel has been cooking for the past three years and has become quite the master of her skill. She credits her mom for teaching her what she knows about cooking.

"I taught myself mostly to bake, however my mom taught me how to cook," Riegel said.

Riegel masterfully creates a wide range of dishes, but she specializes in desserts.

"My favorite thing I have ever made has to be a lavender frozen custard topped with berries and honeycomb crumb," Riegel said.

The chef also incorporates her love of cooking into spending time with people she cares about.

"My favorite memory of baking with Aura is from Thanksgiving break from my sophomore year. I went to her house with our friend Vic. We all made pies together for our Friendsgiving that they were hosting. It was so special and we had the best time," junior Macie Rainey said.

Riegel also enjoys cooking because of the lack of rigidity that the artform requires.

"I like that cooking can be experimental at times and there isn't necessarily a right way to do things," Riegel said.

She plans to attend Robert Burdo Culinary Arts Center in the fall of this year, where she will continue to develop her passion.

"I am so beyond proud of Aura for getting into culinary school. We have been friends since elementary school and I could not be happier for her. It's amazing that they are chasing after their dreams," Rainey said.

After culinary school, Riegel dreams of opening her own business.

"I am so excited to be going to culinary school, and my end goal is to open up my own cafe or coffee shop," Riegel said.

When Riegel does open a business, she can be sure that she already has her first customer.

"I love Aura's cooking so much, and would absolutely go to a cafe [or] coffee shop if Aura decided to open one," Rainey said.

Ethan Goddard

Senior Ethan Goddard's days are just as filled with baking as his cakes are filled with frosting. Although he has been baking his entire life in the form of after school snacks or an occasional cake, he started taking it more seriously in December of 2020.

Initially, he learned the basics of baking from his sister and mother, but later began to look up recipes and watch baking shows such as *Cake Boss* and the *Next Great Baker* with Buddy Valastro.

"When I was around 12 years old, my family and I went to visit my mom's cousin who lived two blocks down from Buddy's original Carlo's Bakery. That always made me want to make cakes like the ones I saw in the show and in the shop. When the pandemic rolled around I found myself with nothing to do and rewatching old episodes of *Cake Boss* which made me decide to try and make a cool cake for our Christmas dinner which was a little blue gift box cake with snowflakes on it," Goddard said.

After showing his friends the Christmas gift box cake he began to receive requests for other kinds of designs, leading him to co-start his small business, Frosted, with his sister. When she went off to college, he took over the business and started an Instagram account to share his creations and take requests.

"I love baking for both myself and other people. Baking for myself is great because I have a major sweet tooth and love to eat anything I bake. I also love baking for other people, especially when I get requests for custom designs that let me stretch my imagination and allows me to come up with something creative that gives people a personalized treat that makes their day," Goddard said.

People who Goddard has crafted cakes for recognize his dedication and skill.

"I think his cakes are great. They are so intricate and detailed. It is truly amazing all the talent and time it takes to make them. I really admire the fact that he was able to pick up this hobby, apply his artistic abilities and turn it into a business," senior Tess Gundacker said.

Just like with any art form, baking gives Goddard the opportunity to exercise his creative freedom and think outside the box.

"Baking is [a] creative outlet for me, especially when it comes to decorating things like cakes and cookies because it provides you with a blank canvas where you can take any kind of topic or theme and turn it into an edible piece of art. I like requests with themes that really make me think and come up with a creative way to represent it on a cake … I think baking and cake decorating is just like other kinds of art where you can paint things with buttercream or even sculpt things with fondant," Goddard said.

Happy Birt
Linda

Courtesy Photos: Ethan Goddard

Monologues and Music: The Drama-Dons Direct a Short Play Festival

The DramaDons Performance Ensemble presents four student-directed one-acts for their spring production

Finley Reid | Head Section Editor

A *Breakfast Club*-based comedy, a jukebox musical, a seven-minute phone call, and a sad but hopeful set of Avengers-lite; the DramaDons' first Short Play Festival came to life with wildly different scenes and characters.

Mixing obscure acts with original work, the student-directed performances ran on Thursday, April 28th, and Saturday, April 30th in the AHS Little Theater.

Currently, seniors Anie Heffernan and Natalie Costales are the only two Advanced Drama Honors students, and each played a major role in the project. Heffernan wrote, directed, and starred in the musical "What She Wants" and Costales wrote, directed, and acted in "Stereotypes" in addition to directing two professionally written plays "The League of Semi-Superheroes" and "1-900-Desperate."

The Festival ran for two nights, although the Little Theatre gave previews to select classes during school days. Tickets were free, and both students and parents attended evening performances.

"1-900-Desperate"

Five strangers. One phone call. In the seven-minute act by playwright Christopher Durang, personalities clash and feelings flare as wildly different people ring into an overpriced hookup hotline.

Costales had full creative control, but assistant director, actor, and junior Lily Thomas often stepped in when Costales was absent or preoccupied with another play.

"I feel like most people would not consider me like a leader … in other parts of my life, so it's been an interesting experience to be kind of a leader in this class and step out of my shell a little more," Thomas said.

The shortest One Act, "1-900-Desperate," does not dwell on a deeper message as much as the other plays. Instead, it focuses on comedy.

DRAMA DONS
SPRING
ONE ACT FESTIVAL

Blueprint Graphic/Owen Salmon

"One of the reasons we chose this one is because it's just ridiculous and funny, and I feel like when you go to see theater, that's one of the things you want to see … something that will make you laugh," Thomas said.

Most of the humor comes from the dialogue between the characters. Every speaker in the five-person call is animated and entertaining, from a teenager and a pushy woman to a frustrated feminist and 5-year-old who accidentally dials in.

"When I first read it I was like 'oh my god this is hilarious' and to see the actors I chose … perform it, I think it's perfect for them," Costales said.

"The League of Semi-Superheroes"

Drowning in debt and starved for calls, "The League of Semi-Superheroes" depicts a failing "super" squad of ordinary people with unique talents coming to terms with their situation.

"We are basically a league of personality disorders trying to help people," junior Steph Boustani said.

Costales chose the play and directed it with the help of junior Elise Warren, who also plays The Human Puddle in the show.

"These shows are entirely student-led, so I've worked on direction a little bit in terms of blocking and such, but we have such a great group of actors that my job really has been to focus on my part and keep everyone on task," Warren said.

The play is not student written, but created by professional playwrights Val Smith and Michael Bigelow Dixon. The pair shared both the brainstorming and writing process.

"Personality characteristics [were] inspired by strangers, some by people we know. When we had six or eight character types, we decided to feature them in a ten-minute play, which is about as much time as one can care about cartoony characters on stage," Dixon said.

Exaggerated aspects of the writers' personalities also influenced the characters. In addition to the playful aspect, Smith and Dixon also wanted to highlight ordinary people who want to be superheroes.

"The characters in this play get to combine their personality traits and modest talents with their big dreams of helping others and saving the world," Dixon said. "The characters are admirable in that they are taking concrete actions to achieve their dreams. Losers? Maybe. Dreamers? Aren't we all."

"Stereotypes"

For the third act of the night, Costales' original play "Stereotypes" took the stage. In 15 minutes, Costales' comedy offers revealing monologues, quirky characters, and humorous dialogue.

Set in a high school classroom with a klutzy teacher and caricature classmates, conflict erupts when the play's popular girl loses her bracelet. Through the squabbles and speeches the disturbance inspires, the seemingly stereotypical teens reveal their inner complexities.

Costales began brainstorming for "Stereotypes" last year and wrote it with the hopes to deconstruct high school clichés. Although true to the original concept, the play went through adjustments during production.

"When I started working with the actors who are in it, I tried to adapt it to them even further so that they're comfortable," Costales said.

Initially, Costales did not want to act in her pieces, but she ended up needing to take over the role of the school bully for "Stereotypes." With only a minor acting role, she stepped back from the acting side to concentrate on directing the production.

"I wanted to see what it was like to be just on the directing side … because I've done the acting before and the directing and writing, and it was too difficult of a process and I couldn't focus on directing. So this time I wanted to … put all my energy into making it turn out well," Costales said.

Continued on 30

Quote of the Issue

"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass, it's about learning how to dance in the rain." — Vivian Greene

Jack Gebhardt | Print News Copy Editor

I sit alone, passionately inspiring the fog sunken air with a slow and drawn out breath. I sit alone on the ground, outside my home which holds the memories of a child, one who didn't worry about a big scary future. I sit alone on the ground with my body dripping from a midnight rain, one that fills me with energy and translucency.

My window, on the street-facing the second floor of my home, which is level with the street but maybe sunken a few feet below the pipelines, is open. My dog most likely sleeps on my bed with his black and pink nose dripping with moisture. He's either curled up in a ball or stretched out with both paws sprawling across the blanket. Maybe he's twitching during a midnight dream or breathing heavily from a long day's rest; but one thing I know for sure is that he's lying on his left side, his favorite side, with his blonde furry ears flopping down.

The silent stretch of pavement I sit on marks the end of one road, but splits into two, both ends curving into a circular cul-de-sac. It's ill-lit, especially in the traversal meadow covering an acre or two of uphill grass that rests diagonal from my shadowed mailbox.

I sit on the road that crumbles with cracks which are smooth in some parts, but I'm not thinking about that. I think about–well, nothing really. I just sit there alone. Not thinking. That's what the rain will do to you.

Rain has the prowess to unfasten the seat belt you so tightly hang on to as the car follows a windy path, swerves on an extemporaneous turn, and crawls up a steep hill which ultimately leaves you free falling down the other side.

A big endless abyss lies ahead with little visibility and a life full of possibilities. Life makes it hard to be in the moment as it moves like a speeding car on the road, fills every corner of life with worries or fear, and forces you to adjust to the inevitable.

Regardless, if you spend your time waiting for something to change or vanish, it simply won't.

I've found thinking about the future with a worried mindset leaves your mind snowballing as a part of catastrophic thought. I'm talking about being in the moment and accepting the now or what is here and what has happened, compared to what will happen. I view that as a vital feature in a healthy mindset.

Sometimes we need the rain to slow us down on the road so we can grow, like how mother nature requires precipitating downfall to prosper a brighter and greener planet. I sit alone on the street soaking in the hiatus the rain provides, the singular moment we need to reevaluate life and practice gratitude.

At the end of the day, the clock is ticking. A large scary future becomes smaller each time the large hand ticks. The clock does not stop, and life does not wait.

Blueprint Photo/Ben Kokel

Short Play Festival

Continued from 29

"What She Wants"

The original jukebox musical "What She Wants" is a teen love story between two best friends, Rosalina Heffington, played by Heffernan, and Charlie Johnson, played by junior Lux Downing-Griggs.

Heffernan began brainstorming for "What She Wants" last year and wrote with a central plan in mind, which remained through later revisions.

"[I kept] the structure that it always had, and it was just how that was going to happen," Heffernan said.

The musical opens with Heffernan alone center stage posing the question "What is love?" which her character tries to answer throughout the performance.

"I've gone through a lot of back and forth in relationships and stuff like that, and honestly [the musical] was kind of trying to show that it's ok for people to lose feelings," Heffernan said.

To enhance the story, Heffernan rewrote the lyrics to fit chosen songs and the storyline. She also used YouTube and Instagram to help brainstorm the choreography. Heffernan ended up cutting some songs for time but retained one important to the plot.

"I love music and acting and honestly there were a lot of songs that I really just wanted to perform … specifically the very first song 'All You Want To Do.' I've always wanted [to] perform that song with people coming out and playing those characters that she is talking about," Heffernan said.

With the production over, Heffernan still has plans to show the piece to future productions and expand on it if given the opportunity.

"I would love to make it longer, I could make it a three-hour show if I really wanted to," Heffernan said.

Costales and Heffernan may be leaving DramaDons, but the Spring Short Plays Festival will continue with new voices in the coming years and keep bringing original work to the Acalanes community.

"I feel like it's kind of my time to say goodbye ... it was a great experience and I'm just grateful that I was able to be a part of it," Costales said.

Talent Show Takes Center Stage

Students perform a variety of acts showcasing their unique talents

Sophie Gold | Staff Writer

Spectators crowd into the PAC, ready to watch Acalanes students perform acts ranging from gymnastic routines to robot performances.

Students displayed their various abilities at the Acalanes Talent Show on April 20th in the Performing Arts Center (PAC) from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

The talent show was a beloved tradition at Acalanes, but due to COVID-19, it was unable to happen. After 3 years, its return was highly anticipated.

"I was eager to bring it back because in 2020 we did a virtual talent show which was awesome but definitely not the same, and we haven't had one since then," Leadership teacher Katherine Walton said.

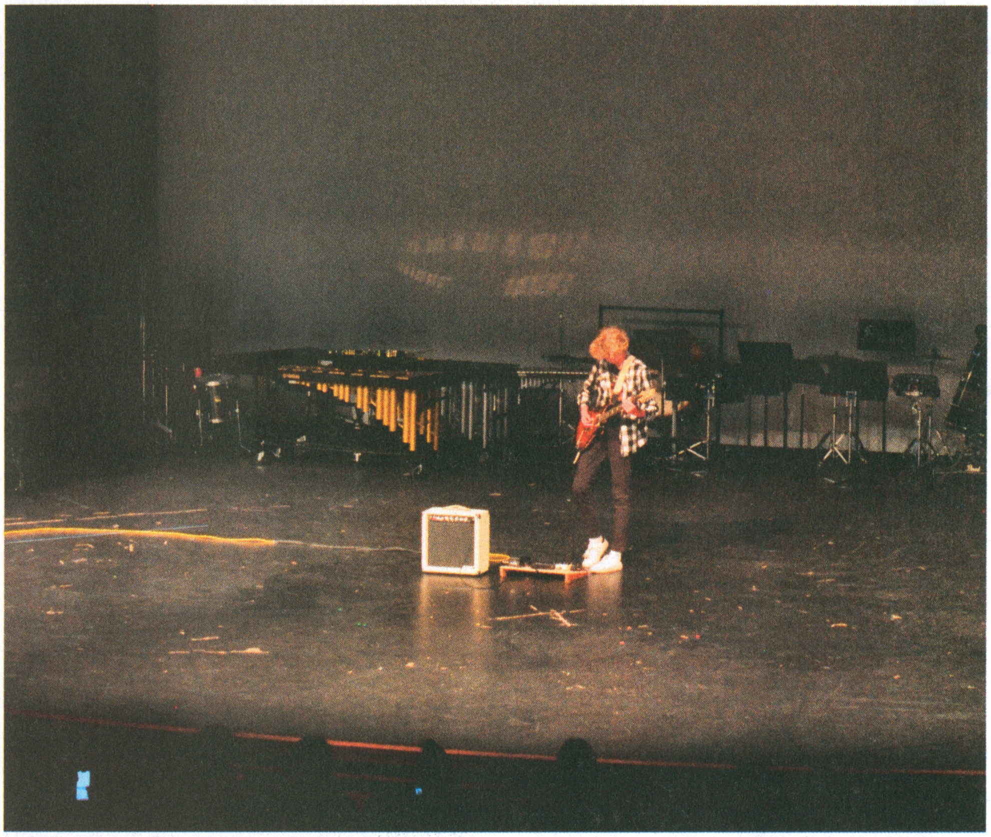
The Associated Student Body (ASB) team played a significant role in organizing the event with different members in charge of the different aspects of putting on the show.

"[Everyone] in the six-person ASB team has taken on different roles and the different pieces of it are managing night of things, publicity, coordinating with the hosts, doing applications for acts, running tech, and running sound," ASB Vice President and senior Sophie Westen said.

Before the event, applications were sent out to students and anyone that wanted to perform was given the opportunity.

"We sent out applications both for hosts and acts, these were publicized for anyone to apply to. We asked for audition tapes, however anyone that wanted to got to perform which was great," ASB Public Relations Officer, talent show performer, and senior Tess Gundacker said.

Seniors Theo Stoll, Jake Davis, and Colin Norstad were nominated by their peers to host the show.



Blueprint Photo/Nastia Grits

"Theo, Jake, and Colin, they're a funny bunch, and they're very personable, also we thought they'd be good at doing crowd work, so we decided to give them a platform," Westen said.

The hosts' role was to introduce each act and engage with the crowd in between. Stoll, Davis, and Norstad made the audience laugh with jokes that poked fun at a variety of humorous events on campus from the past year.

"Our goal for the opening monologue was a year in review for Acalanes and then we kind of just thought about stuff that's happened in our lives, funny stuff that's happened during the year, and sort of just went off that," Davis said.

The audience's lively presence in the PAC created a positive atmosphere as they came out to cheer on the performers.

"The audience was amazing ... I just love the initial shock of going out there and seeing so many people out there to support us," talent show performer and frosh Kayla Medeiros said.

For many audience members, the event was a chance to learn more about their classmates.

"I really enjoyed being able to see another side of students that I may have known nothing about or only seen in class," talent show performer and sophomore Issac Hutton said.

Some performers chose to participate in the talent show as an opportunity to express themselves and gain recognition for their work.

"Performing satisfies me creatively. I like to make things that are kind of unique and I hope to release more music that's more offbeat, kind of innovative," talent show performer and senior Cormac Maher said.

The talent show provided a platform for various types of talents to be recognized.

"It's a cool time to let everyone show off their skills, you see sports games and all that put on display, but [the] talent show is that time for other people," Norstad said.

With such a wide range of acts, the talent show truly showcased the diverse talent within the Acalanes community.

"Every single type of talent that can exist at this school can be shown at this talent show, more than just academics. Things that make people unique have a place at the talent show," talent show performer and junior Cody Casey said.

RUEBNER'S RECORDS

Taking a Look at The Best Albums of 2023 So Far

Cole Ruebner | Staff Writer

2023 is obviously far from over. However, as the school year comes to a close, and a plethora of fantastic albums seem to be just around the corner, it is important to look back on the great albums that have kicked off the new year, especially those that may have flown under the radar below more popular releases.

Let's Start Here by Lil Yachty

Lil Yachty was never an artist I really cared about. He always had one or two fun songs, but I never took him seriously as a musician due to his music generally sounding low-effort and boring. However, on *Let's Start Here*, released Jan. 27, Yachty took a drastic change, pivoting from his usual rap sound to a full fledged psychedelic rock sound. Do not let his earlier music put you off, as this is not even a rap-rock combination, it is a full on rock experience.

In order to execute such a drastic transition, Yachty made the decision to recruit other artists that had prior experience in the genre he was dealing with, such as guitarist Mac DeMarco, who worked greatly to the project's benefit. The result was a lush, heavily Pink Floyd-inspired passion project that defied expectations in most every way.

While Yachty does not truly sing on the project, his raspy vocals contribute greatly to the overall psychedelic feel of the album. The song "I've Officially Lost Vision," is a great example of this, with an incredible build up from ambient noise, to a thunderous drumroll, to an extremely satisfying crescendo of wailing synthesizer and guitar riffs that Yachty glides over with ghostly shouts. The opening track, "The Black Seminole," also stands out as a highlight on the album. The song's smooth and full guitar riffs boast heavy Pink Floyd influence, Yachty's fanbase has even dubbed it "Purple Floyd" due to its slowed, laid back nature.

Overall, *Let's Start Here* is a drastic departure from Yachty's usual sound, and a much needed breath of fresh air in an industry that often sacrifices creativity for radio plays. While this is far from the first project to take an artistic leap of such magnitude, it is fantastic to see an artist on his level of recognition taking such a risk. It is clear that he can only grow from this point on.

Ugly by Slowthai

Ugly by Slowthai is a project that is as raw and visceral as it is heart-wrenching and beautiful. In all honesty, the project's certain brand of punk rock has never really been my favorite, with instrumentals I often find to lack substance in favor of flashy, overdramatized edge. However, the reason *Ugly* is an exception is because it is able to balance flashy—and in this case actually good—instrumentals with an incredible amount of substance in lyrics and vocal performances. The project sees Slowthai at his most vulnerable, delving into topics such as depression, nostalgia, and self hatred. It may be a tough pill to swallow in some regards, from the raw instrumentals to the deeply personal messages and themes, but these aspects also make the album extremely gratifying, leaving the listener with much to consider well after the final track fades out.

Some highlights on the album include the slow and dramatic "Never Again," my personal favorite off the project. The song frames a heartfelt story detailing the difficulty of moving past a toxic and damaged relationship. To me, "Never Again" is the most emotional song due to the story Slowthai conveys, as well as the track's strong themes of regret and drug abuse. A crashing drum line and wobbly piano loop feel as though Slowthai is letting out all of his harbored anger, regret and sadness on the instrumental, while his somber voice sounds an inch away from breaking in the spoken verses. Another standout track on the project is "HAPPY," a pure punk rock cut characterized by gliding guitar riffs and unhinged vocals that border between singing and shouting, emphasizing the emotion in Slowthai's voice. The song sounds as though it took heavy inspiration from The Gorillaz' song "Feel Good Inc." sharing many characteristics with the band's experimental punk sound. Furthermore, for those in search of a more traditional, pop-rock leaning experience, "Sooner," delivers and excels. The track brings a strong sense of nostalgia for 2010's pop-rock bands, however with a far deeper sense of visceral emotion.

Ugly is deeply emotional, experimental, and impossible to pin down. The harsh and bitter instrumentation mixed with the pain reverberating through Slowthai's voice create a strong sense of deliberate imperfection, heightened by the personal nature of the topics addressed. *Ugly* is the most emotional project I have heard in a very long time, and I have no doubt that as the year progresses it will retain its status as one of the greatest albums 2023 has had to offer yet.

While the start of 2023 has been fantastic in regards to new music, a great deal of new melodies still linger on the horizon. Boundary-pushing producer KAYTRANADA teamed with feel-good rapper Aminé for a dance-rap fusion titled *KAYTRAMINÉ*, set to release later this year, boasting a fantastic single titled "4EVA," which has garnered a great deal of attention. In addition, a brand new project from indie artist King Krule seems just around the corner, showing great promise judging from the songwriter's earlier works. With so much great music seeming just out of reach, it is important to appreciate what 2023 has had to offer so far, before so many other projects begin to take up the spotlight.

THE BOOK NOOK

Preparing for Pride: LGBTQ+ Novels and Other Fun Summer Reads

***The Summer I Turned Pretty* by Jenny Han**

Aya O'Neal | Arts Copy Editor

"He didn't give me flowers or candy. He gave me the moon and the stars. Infinity."

The Summer I Turned Pretty follows Isabel "Belly" Conklin and her 15th summer at the beach house that she grew up spending her summer vacation at. She shares her time at the house with her brother, her mom, her mom's best friend Susannah, and Susannah's sons; Conrad and Jeremiah Fisher. Belly has always struggled with trying to keep up with the boy's activities, and constantly being treated as the baby of the family. This year, however, things are different. Belly is growing up, and people are starting to view her as more than a little kid. Caught in a love triangle between two brothers, Belly deals with her first love and heartbreak. *The Summer I Turned Pretty* trilogy explores the complexity of family dynamics, dealing with loss and grief, and navigating change. Furthermore, it follows themes of lifelong friendship, young love, and identity. This heartfelt book is the perfect beach read.

***I Kissed Shara Wheeler* by Casey McQuiston**

Hannah Geraghty | Staff Writer

"I have done some of the best work of my life because of you. And I know you have done some of the best work of your life because of me. I don't know a better way to explain what love means to two people like us."

Chloe Green has spent the last four years doing everything she can to win valedictorian and nothing stands in her way now. Nothing except for "perfect" Shara Wheeler, who she's been competing with ever since she moved to False Beach, Alabama from California. When Shara kisses her and then goes missing a month before graduation, Chloe discovers that Shara left her a scavenger hunt to reveal where she is. As Chloe goes through the clues, she realizes that maybe she doesn't know Shara as well as she thought. Something I really liked about the book was how Chloe's perception of the world around her changes as the plot progresses. While she originally hates False Beach because it's nothing like her California hometown, she grows to appreciate some of the differences. She also changes her ideas about what Christianity means to her and her classmates, as she is someone who goes to a religious school but isn't Christian. One of the few things I didn't like about this book was that the dialogue and Chloe's inner monologue could be a little ridiculous at times, though realistic for some high schoolers. Ultimately, I really enjoyed reading *I Kissed Shara Wheeler*, and with plenty of representation and an end-of-school setting, the book is a perfect read for Pride month in June.

***Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Sáenz**

Finley Reid | Head Section Editor

"To be careful with people and with words was a rare and beautiful thing."

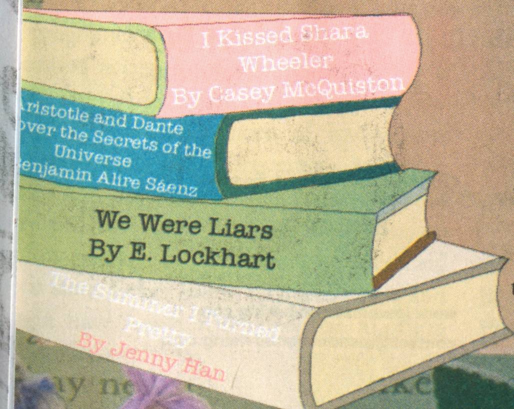
Two Latino teens, one who's always getting in fights, the other who loves poetry, become unlikely friends one summer and teach each other to see the world in a new way. Told mostly throughout two consecutive summers, Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe focuses on the relationship between the classically-named characters, although fills out the cast with family and friends. The novel explores themes of internal and external homophobia, families dealing with mental illness, coming of age, and what it means to be Latinx. Although Dante is an especially heartwarming character, the story can be upsetting with violent scenes and complicated emotions. In 2022, Aitch Alberto debuted as the director of a film adaptation of the novel, with production assistance from Lin Manuel Miranda. Whether looking for a new movie or searching for a Pride-themed summer read, Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe is a worthwhile story to explore.

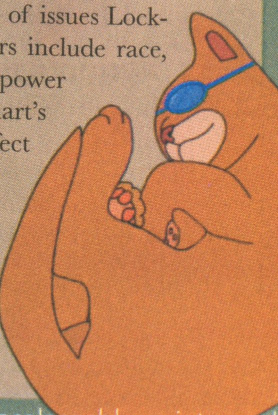
***We Were Liars* by E. Lockhart**

Zinnia Khan | Print Opinion Editor

"Silence is a protective coating over pain."

I don't cry when I read sad books. But I cried when I read E. Lockhart's *We Were Liars*. I didn't cry because it was sad, though. I cried because it was heartbreaking, it was shocking, and it was beautiful. The story focuses on the lives of the perfect Sinclaire family, who might not be so perfect after all. The broad scope of issues Lockhart's book covers include race, classism, and the power of secrets. Lockhart's story is a perfect read for anyone searching for something to lie out on the beach with.





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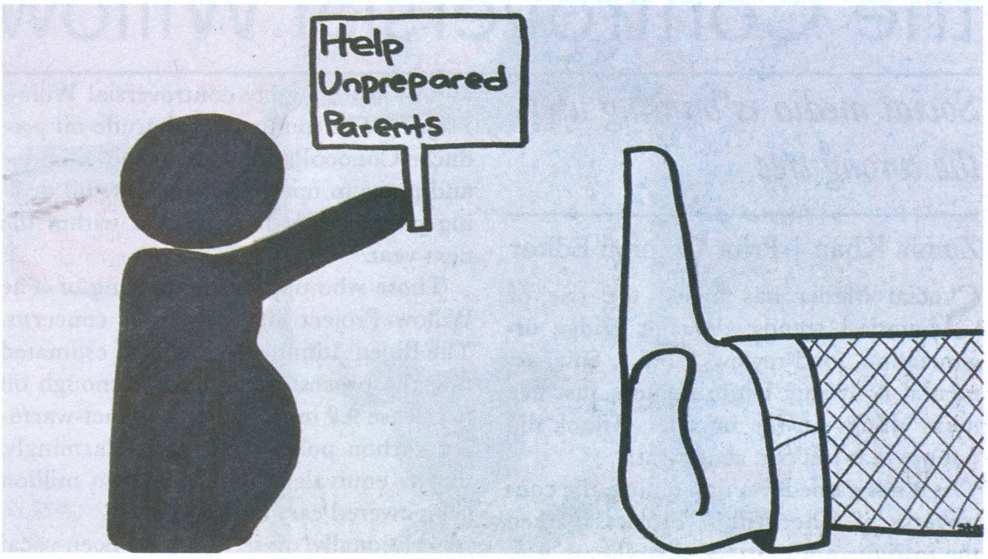
The Pro-Life Agenda Dies at Birth

The infuriatingly unaccommodating nature of abortion legislation

Sof Cerutti | Graphics Manager



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The abortion controversy lost its true nature as a debate when those who claimed to be pro-life passed legislation that actively contributes to the loss of life and well-being of countless Americans.

Since the 1880's, groups who identify as "anti-abortion" and "pro-life" have pushed endlessly for abortion restrictions. Even after major developments in lifting those restrictions in the 1960s and 1970s, these groups are still trying to take the right to abortion away from millions of people in the United States.

Since *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, 14 states across the nation have successfully passed a full ban on abortion. According to *The Hill*, a Washington D.C. based newspaper, multiple of the states without legal abortion have some of the worst healthcare systems in the country. In fact, as of 2020, Mississippi, Louisiana, and West Virginia were in the top five in the nation for infant mortality rates, a statistic that the Center for Disease Control (CDC) backs.

One of the top five reasons for the death of infants is pregnancy complications. Pregnancy complications can include and result in miscarriages, stillborns, and babies with a very low survival chance. Often, people get abortions to prevent these complications. Getting an abortion to prevent otherwise unsolvable problems could also save the life of the parent. Taking the right to abortions away would not only lead to more infant deaths, which are supposedly what the anti-abortion activists are trying to prevent, but it would also lead to more deaths of parents from pregnancy complications.

Limited access to affordable healthcare is also a huge risk for infants. Medicaid is a program that provides millions of low-income Americans with health coverage: including children and pregnant people. Mississippi and Wisconsin, both states that passed full bans on abortion, blocked the expansion of Medicaid in their state. Other states, such as Florida and Georgia have harsh restrictions on abortion and have also blocked Medicaid expansion.

Blocking Medicaid expansion cuts many children and pregnant people off from affordable healthcare. Part of affordable healthcare for mothers includes proper maternal education, necessary sterilization procedures, and access to Food and Drug Association (FDA) approved contraceptives. By cutting off affordable healthcare and sexual education from expecting parents, these laws increase the need for abortion.

A parent that is not properly educated on how to raise a child could also want an abortion, such as a teenager, because they may feel unprepared. A teenager is never eligable to adopt a child, so how is it morally sound to force them to give birth to one? States cannot ban abortions altogether and simultaneously block services that would lower the chances that people would want an abortion.

In Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin, the full abortion ban covers medication abortion. According to a Guttmacher Institute 2022 census, medication abortion made up over 53 percent of abortions in the United States. Currently, there is a ruling in place from the Supreme Court that allows Mifepristone, an abortion pill, to temporarily remain accessible to every state until the Supreme Court makes a final ruling.

The Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine (a newly-formed anti-abortion advocacy coalition) and the American Association of the Pro-Life Obstetricians brought the case against Mifepristone to the U.S. District Judge, Matthew Kacsmaryk, appointed by former president Donald J. Trump. His ruling on the case supported the claim of the plaintiffs that the pill is dangerous because of the way the FDA approved it. The FDA's periodic reviews of the postmarketing data for Mifepristone and its approved generic have not identified any new safety concerns with the use of mifepristone for medical termination of pregnancy through 70 days gestation.

Not only was the pill safely and correctly approved, but it is also safe to use as directed. In fact, Viagra, a medication to treat erectile dysfunction, is about 20 times more likely to send a person to the hospital than Mifepristone, but the danger of Viagra does not seem to bother anyone. Pro-life lawmakers are only going after abortion rights because of their anti-abortion views, not because they are actually worried about the safety of people taking Mifepristone.

The people who call themselves pro-life prove over and over again that they are not what they claim to be. They do not provide proper care and support for the person who is pregnant, there is no support for the newborn, and there is no extra attention paid to the person who is pregnant who could end up possibly dying from carrying a baby to term. Infants and pregnant people are at risk of death from forced births that abortion restrictions cause. The people approving the restrictions are doing nothing to help the parent and the child live, and should not be able to deem themselves 'pro-life'.

Opinion

Social Media's Oversimplification of the Controversial Willow Project

Social media is barking up the wrong tree

Zinnia Khan | Print Opinion Editor

Social Media has fueled the rise of countless trends; dancing, fridge organization, food reviews, and … environmental activism? Unfortunately, just like many things on the internet, Tiktok did not get that last one *quite* right.

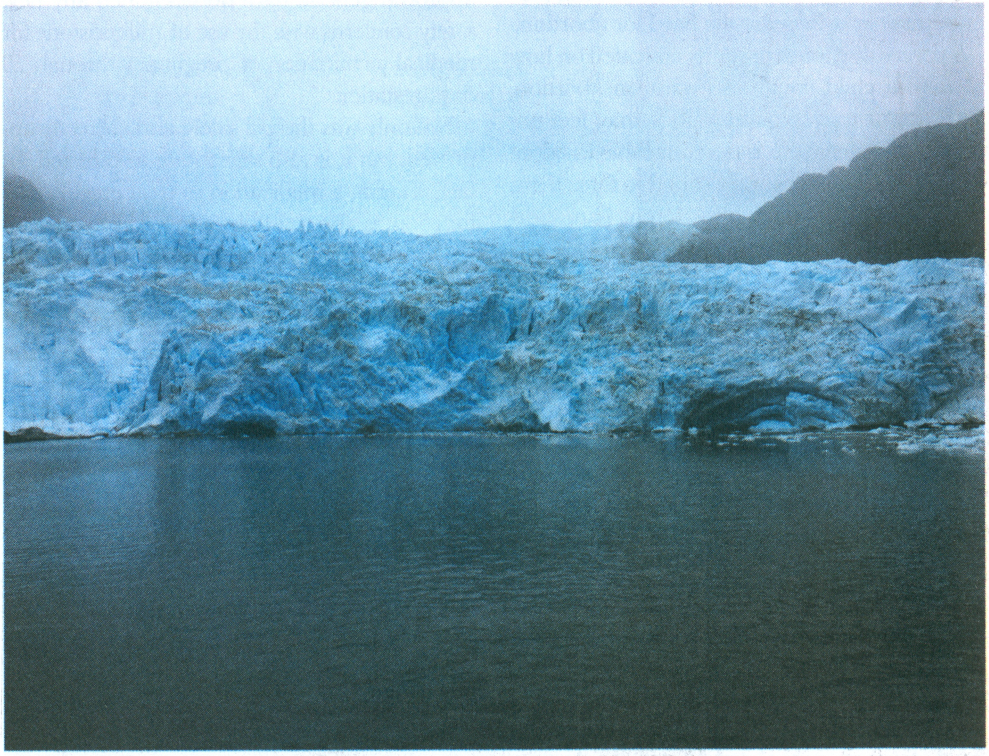
As it has gained traction online, the controversy of The Willow Project sparked the intrigue and outrage of millions. Despite its popularity, it seems as though few fully understand the broad scope of the issue. In order to adequately resolve tensions such as this one, society must contextualize them through a well-researched and unbiased lens instead of blaming the Biden Administration outright.

On March 13, the Biden Administration approved the highly controversial Willow Project. The multinational crude oil producer ConocoPhillips heads the initiative and plans to open up three new oil drilling pads in Northern Alaska within the next year.

Those who oppose the passing of The Willow Project cite numerous concerns. The Biden Administration itself estimated that the process will generate enough oil to release 9.2 metric tons of planet-warming carbon pollution a year. Alarmingly, that is equivalent to adding two million gas-powered cars to the road.

Additionally, those who have been vocal about their disapproval of the plan voice concerns about Alaska Natives living in the area near where ConocoPhillips plans to create the drilling pads. Nuiqsut tribal officials worry that their villages will bear the brunt of the environmental and health impacts of the Willow Project. In a recent press interview, Nuiqsut Mayor Rosemary Ahtuangaruak stated that "Other villages get some financial benefits from oil and gas activity but experience far fewer impacts than Nuiqsut … We are at ground zero for the industrialization of the Arctic,".

Blueprint Photo/Finley Reid



Blueprint Photo/Finley Reid

However, social media has massively misconstrued the true nature of the plan, and it is crucial to recognize what is really taking place before forming drastic conclusions.

Those protesting the passing of the project on social media fail to acknowledge the real role that the Biden administration played in the decision. The issue is not nearly as cut and dry as people tend to think.

ConocoPhillips secured leases to mine in the area under the Trump Administration in 2020, and have decades of legal precedent backing their ability to mine in the area. Additionally, the mining company ensured that courts would not allow

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13 and Under: Too Young For Fame

Examining child endangerment and exploitation amidst social media fame

Erin Hambidge | Staff Writer

Blueprint Graphic/Sof Cerruti

There's a new type of influencer in town, and most of them aren't old enough to drive without a car seat. That's right, amidst a sea of wannabe micro-celebrities, child content creators are taking the internet by storm. The only catch to this meteoric rise in popularity is the simple fact that many of them don't want to be online at all.

Meet Julia (a fictitious name to avoid promoting actual child creators), a six-year-old girl who walks an audience of over six million people through her morning routine. As Julia struggles to unscrew the cap on her toothpaste and fold her pajamas, her parents watch silently in the background, occasionally interrupting to reposition the camera or prompt her to complete a different task. She is just one of the thousands of children who perform a bizarre form of entertainment for majority-adult viewers. Julia, and every other child like her, never consented to have every aspect of her personal life broadcasted to unrestricted audiences. Children too young to read chapter books are not capable of understanding the repercussions of internet fame, nor the issues that arise with such fame later in life. The United States must update its digital consent laws to protect minors and prevent parents from monetizing their children in their most vulnerable state.

Child celebrities are nothing new. Beauty pageants, youth sports, and teen networks like the Disney Channel have brought minors into the limelight for decades. All present similar issues regarding child fame, however, the current social media craze has magnified these problems to the point of child endangerment. The explosion of youth content creators is not accidental, but rather the product of a formula that has been brewing since the creation of TikTok in 2016. The first variable in this formula is the creation of micro-celebrities: accounts with about 200 thousand followers that attract a moderate amount of income through brand deals. The second: billions of TikTok users hungry to ingest the newest short-form content. The third: opportunistic parents willing to display their children for a quick cash grab. These three factors essentially create a perfect storm for youth exploitation.

The situation escalates quickly. Parents may start by posting about their child's first day of school, or perhaps sharing a video of their daughter's soccer game. Soon, though, as people clamor for more content, the footage becomes far more intimate. Instead of milestone moments, parents share their child crying after a bad day or struggling to complete their homework. It's a vicious cycle, fueled by the fact that people seem to engage more with personal content than general footage. One such video, of a little boy screaming after spilling his drink, received over one million views. It's cheap entertainment, catered to the surety that people love watching kids.

If that sounds gross, for lack of a better word, it is. Of course, many people who subscribe to child social media channels are parents, grandparents, or other children, however, millions more are grown adults, with no reason to be following the morning routine of a six-year-old girl. According to the FBI, over 500,000 predators exist online *daily*. Even though public social media accounts can remove followers, they are unable to do so in a timely, effective way. Many don't attempt to filter their followers at all.

Upon examining a popular TikTok account run by a young girl and her mother (username will remain anonymous), the videos with the most views/likes/shares are of "bathtime." A similar trend exists across many other accounts, usually, those featuring girls below the age of ten. Yes, the issue begins with online predators who search for such content, however, the real problem is parents who knowingly place their daughters in that position. Even after widespread concern for their child's safety surfaced, the parents refused to take down the video, citing the fact that no real harm had occurred. I disagree.

Right now, their daughter is too young to realize what's happening. She doesn't understand that her parents are plastering her bathtime across the internet, and it will remain there for years to come, if not forever. When strangers approach her in public, greeting her by name, she will wonder if she's safe. Sometimes her classmates will show her videos, moments she barely remembers her parents filming and posting years before. The remnants of her childhood fame will forever linger; as she applies to college, posts on her own social media, and starts dating. All of this, parents claim, is worth it for the benefits the short-lived stardom provides.

According to many parent channels, these benefits, in the form of cash and brand deals, are enough to put their child through college, or fund alternate post-graduation plans. However, there is no such evidence that parents are saving the funds for that specific use. Financial transparency is nonexistent, and no legislation exists to enforce this transparency. Additionally, social media brings into question the concept of digital consent, a fairly abstract idea that lacks concrete regulations due to its novelty. The most effective solution to promote digital consent among families is to enact legislation that enforces it, though that in itself poses a challenge. Family affairs, despite being broadcasted online, are personal and private. It's often unclear whether or not a child feels comfortable being featured on their parent's channel.

The existing power imbalance between parents and young children furthers the complexities of creating regulations. Children may feel coerced into participating in social media activities or simply volunteer. Years later, if they regret that decision, it's too late. For this reason, I believe companies should only allow children 13 and up, the current age restriction used by most social media apps, to participate in public social media accounts/channels.

There is no perfect solution to this problem. Social media has evolved outside the bounds of enforcement, and child content creators have only darkened the murky waters of acceptable social media use. In these waters, however, one thing is clear: children do not belong on social media. Let's protect children, and recognize that their safety and well-being are far more important than a finite number of likes and followers.

Willow Project

Continued from 36

the Biden Administration to fully reject or drastically reduce the plan when they secured their rights to the area.

So, the Biden administration's hands were essentially tied in approving the project. That being said, the Biden administration reduced the initial plan from five drilling pads to three, a considerable improvement from the original estimate ConocoPhillips presented in 2020.

Many protesters of the Willow Project also claim that the opening of the mine violates Biden's promise to not open any more oil mines under his presidency. However, a few months after Biden made this promise, a federal judge rejected his drilling pause, and the administration has since opened up several new areas for drilling.

The issue of The Willow Project affects everyone. We will all suffer from the harm that excessive oil drilling is causing our planet, though those of us living in higher risk areas such as the Nuqsuit Tribe will feel the damage more. However, the poorly fact-checked information being spread on the internet about the plan is crucial to learn from. The Project is the perfect example of how social media is ruining our generation's ability to contextualize issues and see the pros and cons of every controversy.

The Acalanes community is especially guilty of this. Our school exists in such a homogenous bubble of beliefs that we often lose sight of the importance of listening to others, and pick drastic sides without leaving room to learn from others.

Take our walkout, for example. On March 11 of last year, hundreds of Acalanes students walked out of their fourth-period classes in protest of the anti-LGBTQ+ laws being passed across the country. The protest was deeply meaningful to many Acalanes students, including myself, and was a crucial uniting factor for our community over the troubling issues arising in other states. It was also a walkout.

The law requires high school administration to punish students for leaving class early, and if the teachers did not threaten the students with detention for leaving class early, the element of protest would lose its significance. In order to maintain the meaningful nature of protesting, one has to be going against the grain of what power figures expect of us. If the administration just allowed students to walk out with no perceived repercussions, there would be no point in protesting at all.

Regardless of this, those who participated in the walkout largely demonized our principal for threatening us with detention, even though he did not ultimately end up punishing anyone who walked out.

The scenario was the perfect example of turning against a power figure without solid grounds to blame them. The frustration with Acalanes Administration is understandable, just like it is understandable to be angry with Biden and his climate team, but neither feeling adequately responds to the truth of the scenario they exist in.

In order to make progress, we must be mindful of where we direct our anger, and be mindful of seeing the full picture before jumping to conclusions. The villains in the story of the Willow Project are not necessarily the Biden Administration, they are the courts that passed the decades-old leases that prevented Biden from being able to revoke the plan, the oil dependent economy that the United States exists in, and the centuries of legal precedent that allows horrible plans like the Willow Project to exist in the first place.

To make a change, addressing the root of the problem is far more productive than festering in anger towards someone whose hands are bound by the system that their positions force them to exist within.

Americans' Duty to Cross the Peripheries of Ego, Belief, and Sound

Listening is the key to spreading political beliefs with people who disagree

Lyanne Wang | Staff Writer

When discussing politics, it's hard for me to respect someone's opinion if it's frustrating to talk with them. A little irrational, I know, but it's reality. It's hard to listen to people who talk over us, quote irrelevant studies, or simply refuse to acknowledge what we say.

Although it's easy to shut our ears in these instances, I urge Americans to realize that the inability to listen translates to the inability to convince.

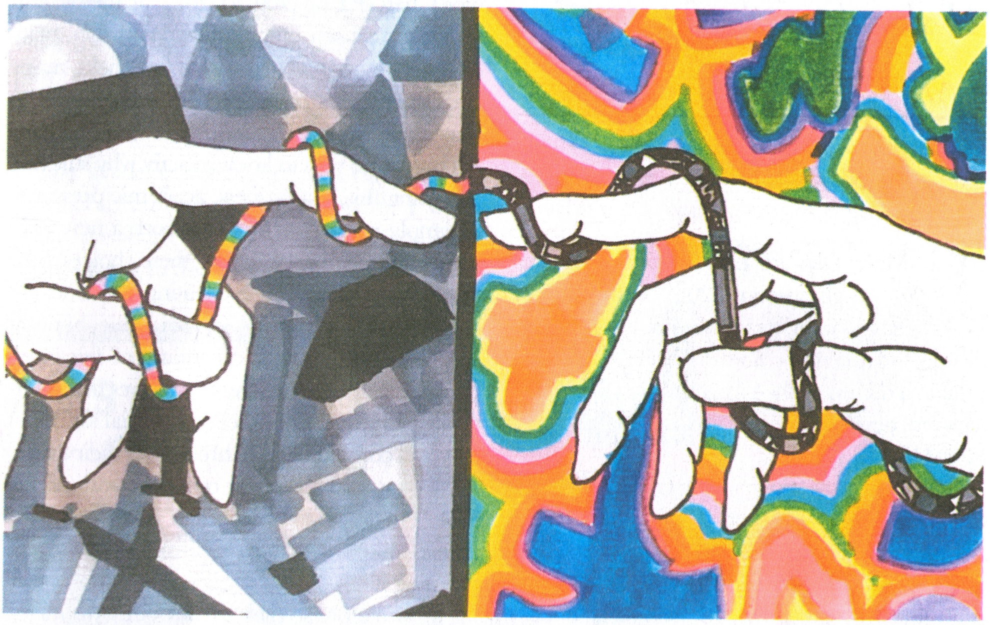
Our nation will fail to solve any major problem if parties continue to toss arguments back and forth without listening to the opposing side. It is impossible to reach agreement if each faction never crosses the boundaries of their own beliefs.

On a smaller level, these parties consist of voters; they consist of each one of us. Whether we realize it or not, partisan antipathy seeps through every aspect of our social lives, influencing who we're friends with and which news anchors we admire. The Pew Research Center recorded that 63 percent of consistent conservatives and 49 percent of consistent liberals say "most of their close friends share their political views."

We must break down our egos and open our minds to what all people have to say. This isn't just addressed towards the avid Trump supporters who converse in echo chambers and ostracize anyone with dyed-hair; this also goes for the dyed-hair feminists who yell out progressive chants coded in a sense of moral superiority.

One cannot gather others to agree with their beliefs if they refuse to acknowledge that any other opinion can be correct.

We know this. If someone continually dismisses what I say, I become defensive. I start to yell out my thoughts to get my point across rather than try to understand their viewpoint. If it appears as though someone isn't listening to what I say, I grow frustrated, and this adds tension to the dynamic. It's difficult to reach a conclusion with someone when both parties are more driven by emotions than by the actual problem at hand.



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However, the opposite also proves true. As a social advocate who frequently converses with individuals who disagree with me, I've recognized that as soon as someone starts listening to me, I start listening to them.

All it takes to break the cycle of unproductive conversations is for one person to first let go of their ego. Let go of the need to "be right." Let go of attacking someone's character, even if they're saying what feels like the most morally unjust statements. Let go of the rush of anger that comes when they keep interrupting our every word.

Let go of this, and open the mind and body to the other speaker. Face them, and listen to their words. Understand why they are saying what they are, why they are thinking the way they are, and then ask why we still believe in our own opinion. Investigate the intricacies of their beliefs and compare them to our own. Only by doing so can we create a renewed argument of our own ideas targeted toward that person's method of thinking. Only by doing so can we get others to listen, understand, and agree.

Allowing those who disagree with us to fully express their ideas does not mean that we accept them as true. Instead, dedicated listening grants us leverage on both the emotional and logical aspects of the debate. We stay calm and thus rational, we keep the speaker content so they will listen to what we say in return, and we absorb perspectives to create a more encompassing argument.

Furthermore, composure as a listener leads to composure as a speaker. There is power in waiting for one's turn to speak, in coherently responding to the points of the opponent, and in using our voice efficiently.

Even if the person we are speaking to shows no sign of changing their mind at the moment, do not underestimate the effect of paying attention to their thoughts and calmly presenting our side. It might take a day, a month, a year, or maybe never, but our words will stick with them if we enact the aforementioned details. They may begin to open their minds because we opened our minds to them.

As a whole, it's imperative we recognize that the way we communicate is just as important as what we communicate. If we wish to have productive conversations rather than angry disputes, we need to let go of the ego's desire to interrupt and ignore. We need to listen to other beliefs. The failure to do so marks the continuation of America's extreme political polarization.

Opinion

The Development of Artificial Intelligence is the Death of Our Creativity

AI slaughters the future voices of the world

Maya Agarwal | Print Feature Editor

Jean-Marc *Côtés En L'An 2000 (In The Year 2000)*: Aa glimpse into 20th century urban society's fascination, material desires, and prediction for a century ahead. While flying cars remain a dream of the past, humanity has managed to develop vacuums, electronic clippers, motor homes, and siri.

Although these tools have increased the efficiency in which people complete hands-on tasks, this new generation of technology, artificial intelligence (AI), is pioneering a movement toward sloth and regression. Youth's close relationship with AI scars them and will lead future generations to creativity's demise and society's graveyard.

While AI, a machine replication of human intelligence, began to gain traction in the 1980s, it wasn't until the late 2000s that these simulations began to violate and steal private information.

However, when OpenAI launched its prototype ChatGPT on Nov. 30, 2022, academic ethics took a catastrophic plunge. With the ability to generate original text with a few clicks, many English students have opted to use the tool to write their essays.

There is no way to know exactly why students are doing this, but laziness, academic pressures, or simply just an attempt to absorb a new writing technique may be fueling these choices. Still, one thing is clear: this is cheating. Students are cheating their teacher's of academic honesty, they are cheating their classmates of fair grading, and they are cheating themselves of opportunities to learn and practice essential skills that they will continually use throughout their lives.

I know, students cheat on homework all the time, but having a computer go through the entire brainstorming and writing process – and claiming it as your own – is not the same as using a calculator for math homework. I wonder if students realize they are substituting the foundation of their future careers for a gloat-able grade.

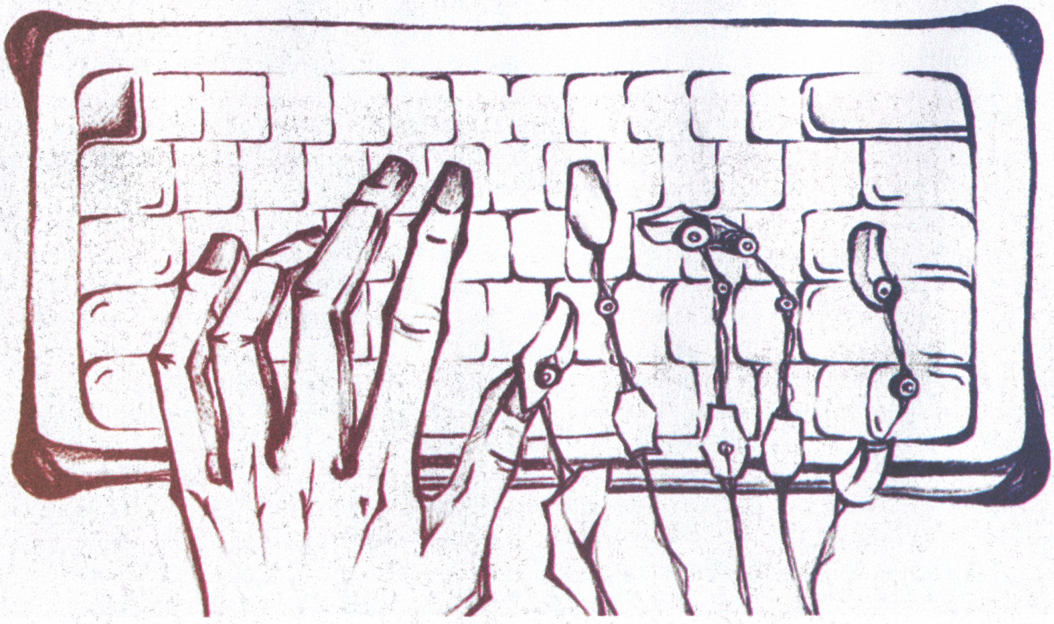
Already, with a still-maturing prefrontal cortex, adolescents are able to learn more efficiently and flexibly than adults. The government requires English courses to teach and assign essays so students learn how to gather information, organize ideas, and communicate their thoughts through a clear composition.

No matter its frequency, academic writing appears in almost all occupations, whether one is enforcing argumentative skills, utilizing critical thinking tactics, or applying research habits. Subsequently in the workforce, many bosses choose the strongest performers and reject the weakest ideas. Every individual's development of these essential skills is vital for not only one's personal success, but also for a functioning society.

Most importantly, though, youth will not learn how to speak for themselves. By asking AI to write our research papers and argumentative essays, we put a lock on our ability to generate unique opinions and express all sides of the story. With gray minds, humanity will suffocate on its own tongue, painfully squeezed in a cage that AI has stolen the key to.

Educational institutions recognize the magnitude of this foundational element, and administrators have since taken the approach of enforcing basic cheating protocol when detecting AI written pieces. While schools have no official solution to this issue, many believe handwritten, in person essays will become a classroom staple.

While I believe learning how to become a fast writer is an important skill to have under one's



Blueprint Graphic/Maya Agarwal

belt, there is a reason students complain about in-class essays. For many, limited time and the school setting creates a difficult environment to focus, grow, and reflect.

As someone who is a slower writer, a curriculum with only class essays truly frightens me because, while I can pick apart and develop beauty throughout my sentences at home, my grade only represents my panicked thoughts during class.

Still, this issue goes beyond the grade. Not only are students not learning how to formally write, but they are not able to use writing as an outlet of expression. I adore writing. Writing allows me to develop my thoughts when I cannot express them verbally. I can even develop ways to tell a story that has no script. When there is not a word to describe how I am feeling, not a word to describe an action or consequence, I can manipulate syntax and diction to illustrate it.

Beyond this, I love writing because I find comfort in the sense of control I have over everything I do and everything I don't. It can takes me to places of ease and places of havoc; it takes me to what I need. By this, writing is my biggest support.

So, when I see classmates turning in a ChatGPT written assignment and receiving a similar grade, if not higher than mine, I don't sulk about an unjust grading system. I worry about the future of this world. I worry about what is going to disappear.

AI is tempting youth to trade their voice for convenience today, but lack of creativity in the future. Authorities need to find a way to solve this issue, but scamming youth of practice is not the way to do so. There is no perfect solution, but maybe it can begin with restricting the public's close access to this technology and reminding students of the repercussions for taking practice for granted.

My concluding thought is this: I urge anyone who is reading, don't fall to the hands of what is easy now. You don't have to write everyday, you don't even have to like writing, but when you have the opportunity to develop essential skills and strength in prose, use your voice, don't smother it.

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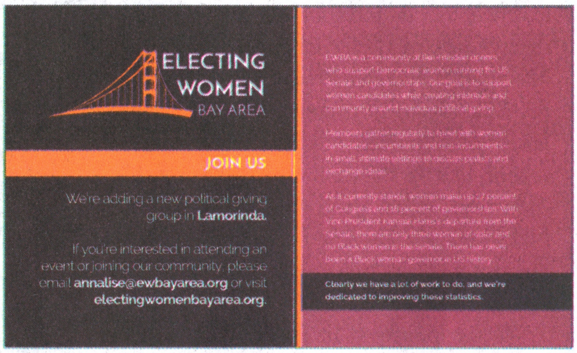

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CHRIS CLARK SPOTLIGHT

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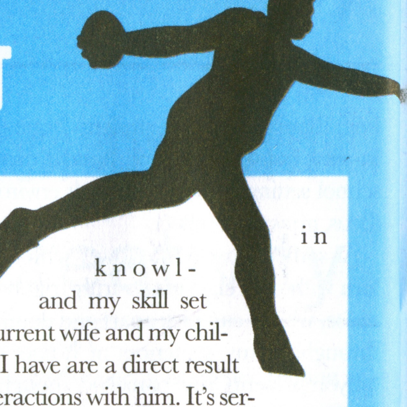

Athletic trainer, sports medicine teacher, discus and shotput coach, PE teacher, father, and husband. What does Chris Clark not do? In his 19 years at Acalanes, he has made a huge impact on the Acalanes campus.

Clark's interest in sports began In high school, where he played football and track and field (discus and shotput events). While there, Clark made a connection with Stan Nakahara. Nakahara was the informal high school athletic trainer, a football coach, and a track and field coach at Clark's home school. Due to the time they spent around each other, Clark grew a connection with Nakahara and became more interested in the career of working in sports medicine or as an athletic trainer.

"I got interested in [Sports Medicine] when I was in his classes and I saw what he was doing, he helped tape people and treat people," Clark said.

When he graduated, Clark decided to pursue sports medicine at UC Davis while simultaneously playing for the football and track and field teams. He had a full social life and was taking difficult courses. Clark became so involved socially and athletically that his grades became less of a priority and he ended up having to leave Davis.

"I was a pre-med major at UC Davis and I just completely overextended myself while I was there," Clark said.

After bouncing around Junior Colleges and trying to figure out what was going to work for him, he decided that his main goal should be to graduate college. He settled on a business major because it didn't seem too difficult.

"I finally landed at Saint Mary's College where I got a degree in Business Administration and economics. Then I was like, I don't want to do anything with this degree. I want to get back into my path, towards Sports Medicine," Clark said.

He graduated from St. Mary's in the Spring of 1999 with his business degree. Clark felt like he could use some help getting back on track with sports medicine, so he thought about Nakahara and remembered hearing that he had left teaching to open his own clinic. Clark decided that reconnecting with him would be a great way to get back into sports medicine, but he had no idea where or what Nakahara was up to.

"I had not connected with him in a really long time. But, I had to get back into this, and when I looked [Stan Nakahara] up, I couldn't find him for the longest time," Clark said.

That summer, Clark made a good effort to reconnect with Nakahara, but could not find him. Still, Clark decided to return to Diablo Valley College in the Fall of 1999 to get back into sports medicine. At least then he could try to re-embellish himself into sports medicine, even while having no luck finding Nakahara. Then, his life took a big turn.

"Randomly, in December of 1999, I was already at DVC, I was trying to get back into [sports medicine]. I need to take in everything to kind of get back into physical therapy/sports medicine and just randomly my mom and my sister ran into him at Stanford Shopping Center," Clark said, "They told him I've been trying to contact him and he goes, 'Here's my number, have him call me,' and I called him up and I was interning with him after January 1st. As they say, the rest is history."

By reconnecting with Nakahara, Clark was able to get valuable experience that would allow him to pursue a career in sports medicine. That interaction between Clark's mother and Nakahara marks a huge moment in determining Clark's career.

"He had a contract with USA volleyball, so he worked on high level stuff. We used to see a bunch of Cal athletes in our time at the clinic, so it was just a really fantastic opportunity that I got to find him again and have him be my mentor," Clark said.

Clark says that his time at the clinic really helped him fine-tune his skills while getting through his courses at DVC. Clark also took classes at Cal State Hayward so that he could take more advanced courses. Having Nakahara as his mentor helped him find his true passion again and pursue it in life. But, as if the story was not grand enough, he fell in love with and married Nakahara's daughter.

"He ended up becoming not just my mentor but my father-in-law, so everything that has been good about my life, as it relates to sports medicine, and in my knowledge and my skill set and my current wife and my children that I have are a direct result of my interactions with him. It's serendipity, man," Clark said.

It is fair to call Clark's story movie-like. But, there is more to it. After all, he is not only a father and husband, but also an athletic trainer, sports medicine teacher, discus and shotput coach, and PE teacher at Acalanes.

His career as a high school athletic trainer started at St. Mary's Berkeley High School. While working there, he was looking to expand into academics as well by teaching a sports medicine class. St. Mary's Berkeley did not acknowledge that Clark could expand into an academic role, though. Luckily, a friend of Clark's made him aware that there was a job opening at Acalanes for an athletic trainer. As Clark says it, the Acalanes Union is a "destination district," so he applied for the job. After interviewing with the Athletic Director and Principal, Acalanes accepted him to be the athletic trainer and teach one sports medicine class.

"I feel really fortunate that I had those two people see something in me that, you know, allowed me to at least get my foot in the door and give this a shot, and then I did what I could to make the best of it. And here I am 19 years later," Clark said.

Since then, he has been the athletic trainer and teaches one or two classes on sports medicine each year. But, he still had a passion for throwing, so he started to involve himself in the Acalanes track and field program as well.

"When I first got the job here, I was kind of messing around with [throwing]. We already had a well-established and well-respected throws coach here and he was gracious enough to welcome me into the program," Clark said.

He fit right in with the program and gained recognition from track and field athletes who appreciate him and the love that he has for coaching.

"He's really helped me as a coach, you can tell how much he cares. He teaches the whole program how we can improve and

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Tearing off Flags and Tackling Barriers

Anticipating women's flag football's likely arrival at Acalanes

Jacqueline Kuhner, Reid Aldrich, Haley Chelemedos | Print Editor-in-Chief, Online Managing Editor, Print Feature Editor

Watching football on television seemed like the closest female athletes could get to the football world—now, they have a chance to participate.

The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) and the CIF North Coast Section (NCS) governing boards voted unanimously to approve women's flag football as an official high school sport, likely to arrive at Acalanes in the fall of the 2023-2024 academic year.

The introduction of women's flag football gained traction in the CIF Southern Section, the first section to approve the sport. After just one year of play, the CIF Federated Council Meeting passed women's flag football for the entire state, including NCS who also decided to officiate the sport.

Considering both crowd size and the number of players, tackle football is the most popular sport at Acalanes. However, there has only been one female tackle-football player since Acalanes' founding in 1940. While Acalanes' athletic participation levels are consistent with the school's gender demographics, some believe that women should have always had a different option in football.

"I think [women's flag football in high school] should have been expected…For any sport that has a male team, there should be the option for a female team. I think over and over women have proved that they are 100 percent capable of competing and putting on a pretty good show of any sport that pops up," San Francisco Women's Flag Football League Commissioner Juliet Rubio said.

At Acalanes, many female students are excited about the possibility of participating in flag football. For students who may not have wanted to join tackle football, the flag football community could serve as a better fit.

Blueprint Contributing Photo/Audrey Martin

"I think it's definitely good for girls that might not want to join a football team full of, you know, guys. And it's fun to try new things, especially like watching football and then you get to actually play," sophomore and female tackle football player Lucca Debiasse said.

The traditional reason for women not to play tackle football lies in the strength and size barrier female athletes face. Women's flag football tends to rely more on speed and coordination, opening the world of football up for more players.

"Tackle becomes so heavily based on size. One thing I really appreciate about flag football is, as a smaller person, I can compete…There's kind of a spot for everyone, and that's what I really appreciate about flag versus tackle," Rubio said.

Women's flag football is just one of the two new sports at Acalanes, the others being competitive stunt cheer which started in the 2018-19 school year, and beach volleyball which started during the spring of 2023. Student advocates hope that these sports will increase opportunities for female athletes.

"I think for the first time, we will have significantly more opportunities for female athletes to play sports. We introduced beach volleyball this year, so that's an automatic. We introduced stunt a couple years prior to that, so now we'll have stunt, beach volleyball, and then potentially flag football that would be entirely female athlete sports," co-Athletic Director Haley Walsh said.

Conversations around the potential arrival of flag football have been prevalent among athletic directors and Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) staff. Concerns about getting enough interest to have school teams were one of the top areas of consideration when planning the next steps.

"The fall is very heavy in terms of girls' sports. Cross country, golf, tennis, volleyball, waterpolo. And so, how many more athletes are there that aren't already doing those that would want to play," co-Athletic Director Randy Takahashi said.

AUHSD sent out an interest survey to all rising frosh, sophomores, juniors and seniors, in hopes to find out if there was enough interest to start planning for teams. Of the ten percent of the entire District that responded, 122 female students input that they were interested in playing flag football.

"Hopefully none of those girls are currently fall athletes or [are] committed with other sports, because that was my concern about flag football moving forward in the interest because we have so many female athletes that are very committed to their other sports. [Another concern is] if this is something that would fit into their schedule and their other commitments. And we'll see if they can do that if they're interested. Our female athletes in our district are excellent, and they're really committed, and to do a new sport sometimes that's hard," AUHSD Director of Fiscal Services Nick Carpenter said.

Now, with a high chance of the introduction of flag football in the fall, student committees are preparing to support the new flag football community as they start playing games.

"I think it's a big stride for female athletes because football is such a big focus and popular men's sport, that now having a female sport that can go along with it is a huge step to gaining more of an audience to female sports," Female Athlete Board (FAB) President Tatum Zuber said.

FAB is currently working on increasing crowd size for female sports, along with The Force, a leadership committee that works to increase crowd size at all sporting events.

"I hope that it will have high student attendance. Of course, parents will come to the games, but I hope a lot of students come to the games. I think a lot of it would depend on the time frame of when the games would be played," tackle football head coach Floyd Burnsed said.

General excitement about the new program is rising, as more districts across California prepare to introduce the sport.

Blueprint Contributing Photo/Audrey Martin

"I think flag football is so great because it's a little bit new for everyone. I don't think very many people have been exposed as kids, and so it's just a really cool thing that it's something new for everyone, and we all have a common ground," Rubio said.

Although there is a lot of uncertainty about how AUHSD will organize games and teams, many are hopeful about getting the sport up and running; open to adjustments as athletes and coaches learn more.

"I think it's just to get out and get started right now. Obviously, we want to get to a point where we can have our schools participating, as many as we can get participating in it, we hope to at some point have our Section championships in girls flag football. I don't see that happening next year, we are not anticipating that with the number of schools that we see interest in, and even if we have a whole bunch of schools interested ... But that's the ultimate goal, to have experience just like all of our other sports and have it culminate with the section championships, maybe even somewhere down the line, have a CIF regional," NCS Commissioner of Athletics Pat Cruickshank said.

Chris Clark Spotlight

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he accepts every skill level," sophomore Alex Vasicek said.

Those who take his classes and throw can agree that his ability to teach carries into the classroom. He has been a positive influence on many student-athletes at Acalanes.

"Since I joined his class, he has always [given] his best efforts to push us towards our goals and strive for success. He did the same during our practices," senior Apple Walton said.

Students can see the passion in Clark, and his devotion to Acalanes earned him an honest appreciation from the student body.

"I've never seen any other student listen to someone more than they have listened to Chris, and it's certainly because he has earned his respect around the entire campus," Walton said.

For Clark, his enthusiasm is a part of the job description.

"I want to do what I do at as high a level as I can," Clark said.

He enjoys his job as an athletic trainer and carries his dedication to that aspect of his life, as well.

"I love those moments where I work on an athlete and it works, it sticks, and it clicks and they are better. I do everything I can at the highest level that I can to make sure that our athletes are number one: safe, and then beyond that are back to playing," Clark said.

After some years, Clark decided he could take on more, so in 2010, he got his PE credential. He quickly upped his role to the PE department chair in 2011.

But, his favorite parts about Acalanes arrive in the Fall and Spring, during football and track and field seasons.

"I love coaching. It's my favorite part of the year. And I'm a football guy, obviously for having played in high school and college. And so I love football season too. I love that part of the school year as well, but just coaching for me kind of fills me up," Clark said.

Clark is a fan favorite as the Acalanes community truly appreciates and rallies with him. His ability to do everything at such a high level has earned him the utmost respect from members of the Acalanes community. His story is inspiring and it took an incredible path to get to where he is today.

"I just feel really lucky that I've had some really great help and mentors along the way ... guiding me and steering me and keeping me on track. So I'm grateful for them to have imparted that on me," Clark said.

MLB's Wild New Rules

An overview of the new rules in Major League Baseball and their impact on the game

Kiran Foster and Jake Boselli | Online Editor-in-Chief and Online Podcast Manager

It is no secret that America's pastime is losing popularity quickly. Coming into the 2023 Major League Baseball (MLB) season, viewership and excitement were at an all-time low. Football and basketball dominate the attention of sports fans, and baseball gets kicked to the curb.

However, in an effort to re-engage fans, MLB decided to implement a handful of new rules to improve the pace of play and the entertainment factor of the game.

The two main rule changes were the addition of the pitch clock and the banning of the shift.

In an effort to reduce the time of the previously three hour plus games, MLB implemented the pitch clock. The clock starts at 20 seconds without any runners on, and the batter has until the 8-second mark to be in the batter's box, facing the pitcher. With runners on base, the initial count is upped to 30 seconds.

In an attempt to better engage fans with more hitters reaching base, MLB banned the ever-so-popular shift. In the 2022 season, the shift, which made it harder for hitters to get balls out of the infield, was a major cause for batters' all-time low batting average of .243. This year, two players are required to be on either side of second base, effectively eliminating the shift

So far, feedback on the new rules has been very positive, with viewership rates and batting averages on the rise, as well as significantly decreased game times.

"I like the pitch clock because it speeds up the game and makes it more entertaining … I think the general response is positive because all fans want to see a faster-paced game," junior Jack Giorgianni said.

The games this year are taking two hours and 38 minutes, a 31-minute drop from last year's average. The Miami Marlins had a game that took an hour and 59 minutes, their shortest game in the 21st century.

The batting average is also up this year, at .275 on opening weekend, and projections say that number will continue to increase as batters get used to the pitch clock.

There are two more new rules slightly less game-changing than the first two, but still impactful.

Firstly, the bases were made three square inches bigger, from 15" squared to 18" squared. This move was made to increase steal attempts, as well as make running the bases safer, with less opportunity for collisions on the basepaths.

Secondly, pitchers are now only allowed to pick off runners twice per at-bat. This rule was mainly put in place to keep game time down but has led to other unexpected outcomes.

Because pitchers are only allowed to step off twice, runners essentially can get a free steal of second base. Steals are up dramatically compared to the last 10-15 years, with 70 stolen bases during opening weekend, compared to only 29 from the year before.

Runners are attempting to steal at twice the rate of last year, with a 20 percent increase in stolen base success rate as well. Although fans enjoy witnessing stolen bases, the drastic increase is not popular with everyone.

"Well, the thing I don't like about [the rules] is limiting the throw overs to first base…I think it takes away from the strategy of baseball," former Giants coach and two-time manager of the year Ron Wotus said, "I think [the rules] are a little detrimental to the game as well because the manager's ability to manage the game is being pushed aside to some degree to impose these rules for the speed of the game."

Although some people do not like the new rules, it was inevitable that the sport would have to face major changes. There are always going to be people who prefer the game at its original state, but overall fans are receiving the rules well and even speculating on future changes.

"I believe the automatic strike zone is going to come, I have been watching the Triple A Sacramento [River Cats] (who currently have rules with an automatic strike zone) and everybody I talk to says it will be in the major leagues at some point," Wotus said.

The automatic strike zone is something that will be further down the line, but the date could hinge on how this year's MLB season plays out with the new rules.

If these rules have the desired effects and fan interaction continues to increase, we could see more new rules quickly. So far, MLB has done what it wanted, and the fans seem to enjoy the changes.

"[The rules have] been an adjustment with veteran players, but I think they will make the adjustment and [the new rules] will benefit the game in the long run," Wotus said.

There's A Lot on the Line

The result of this year's NBA Playoffs determines the legacies of many all-time greats

Henry Hagel | Liaison Editor

At the risk of sounding extremely obnoxious, constant winning can get a little boring at a certain point. As a Warriors fan, the last seven years of more or less dominating the National Basketball Association (NBA) postseason have been the best that a fan can wish for. But as I have grown and become more sympathetic for opposing fans, I have begun to notice a number of flaws in having the same three or four teams in the finals each year.

Luckily, as the 2022-23 NBA playoffs get going, I believe that the tides are turning. The competitiveness and evenness of this year's postseason rivals the playoffs of the early 2000's, with each team having a chance to win it all. But I can go one step further and say that this might be the most important and influential postseason of all time as it will dictate the legacy of so many greats.

The most obvious and topical player to discuss is, of course, LeBron James. After he became the league's all-time leading scorer, the debate between him and Michael Jordan for who is the Greatest Player of All Time (GOAT) has become much more even. The main argument for Jordan is his six championships and Finals Most Valuable Players (MVP). But with a fifth Championship and possibly Finals MVP for LeBron, paired with a large advantage in almost all statistics, the argument for Jordan becomes increasingly difficult to make. A 2022-23 championship puts Lebron one step closer to putting the GOAT debate to rest.

The player who probably has the second most to gain from a Championship this year is Chris Paul. A prominent career that has been overshadowed by a lack of playoff success finally has a chance to shine through with a long-awaited championship. Top-20 in career wins, third in career assists, and third in career steals are all numbers of an all-time great; but most fans only care about the number of rings on a player's hand. A Championship for Chris Paul might mean more for his sanity than his legacy, finally putting an end to the jokes and criticism that have followed him for the last five years.

Steph Curry is in a position with little to lose, but a lot to gain. Regardless of how this season ends for him, Curry is undeniably a top-15 player of all time with nothing more to prove. But with a fifth Championship on his resumé, he and Magic Johnson are in a league of their own in terms of all-time great point guards. And when it comes down to the stats, Curry blows Magic out of the water. Furthermore, with a third ring without Kevin Durant, it proves Durant needed Curry, not the other way around. If Curry can lead the Warriors to a fifth championship in his career, he makes a strong push for a top-5 player of all time, and most likely becomes the best point guard of all time.

In a similar fashion to Chris Paul, the number one thing that Nikola Jokić has to do to prove that he is legitimately an all-time great is prove that he can win in the playoffs. He has proven that he is a regular season winner, and has the stats to prove that he can dominate in the league, but unfortunately for him, fans get bored of the regular season. Once you win one regular season MVP, nobody cares if you can do it again. Fans only care if you can do something bigger and better, and the only thing better than an MVP is a championship.

Now for the other side of the spectrum: the biggest losers of this year's playoffs. The first team that comes to mind has to be the Bucks, the victims of the biggest upset of the year. To be perfectly honest, I do not think this will affect Giannis' legacy much. With two MVPs, a defensive player of the year, and one championship at 28 years old, he is already ahead of the pace of most all-time greats. By the time he was 28, Michael Jordan had been bounced from the first round of the playoffs three times, and he had not won a championship yet. Nobody is perfect every year, and in 20 years I really do not think anyone will hold this loss against Giannis.

In my humble (biased) opinion, the biggest loser has to be the Grizzlies team. The front runners of the NBA proved to the whole league that veterans and actual leadership truly matter. Not to sound overly dramatic, but if they were going to make a run, this would be the year. They have four or five players on relatively small deals who are all eventually going to want 20 million-dollar contracts at the very least. Slowly but surely players are going to leave when the Grizzlies can no longer afford them all. On top of all of this, they really just made a fool of themselves.

By the second round, the playoffs are already at the point where I can see any of the teams left winning it all. There may be some winners and losers in this year's playoffs, but at the end of the day, the fans are really the biggest winners. Over a month of really good basketball makes for the best reality television money can buy, regardless of who you root for.

Men's Lacrosse

Henry Hagel | Liaison Editor

As the Acalanes men's lacrosse team (15-2 overall, 9-0 league) wraps up one the best regular seasons in recent history, they look towards the postseason to write their legacy in stone.

With the Dons looking to make a deep push into North Coast Section (NCS) playoffs, the momentum of a 12-game winning streak seems to provide extra support.

"The run we are on just gives us confidence that we can take anyone we come across. It's a great feeling going into the playoffs feeling 100 percent confident in our abilities," senior George Churchill said.

The Dons picked up their fourth win in a row on March 28, beating a solid Bishop O'Dowd team 18-7.

The Dons faced College Park on March 30, leaving Pleasant Hill with an 18-10 win.

Following a well-deserved break, the Dons went on to face Clayton Valley High School on April 11 and displayed defensive excellency, beating the Ugly Eagles 14-3. Two days later, on April 13, the Dons beat Northgate in a close 13-9 game.

In their last non-league game of the season, the team traveled to Piedmont on April 18 and ended up winning 19-10

On April 21, the Dons played their last regular season game against league rival Miramonte. Estee, once again, did not disappoint and led the Dons to a 15-13 win with his nine goals.

"Owen is one of the only players in the area who has the ability to single-handedly take over a game. Knowing that we can always rely on him just makes it that much easier for everyone else to do their jobs," junior Collin Malmquist said.

In a heated rematch against Miramonte in the first round of the Diablo Athletic league (DAL) playoffs, the Dons came away with a 17-11 win but lost two players due to suspension for the next three games.

Despite missing a couple of key players, Acalanes was able to beat Campolindo on April 28 in the DAL championship. Acalanes trailed for most of the first half, but behind junior Marshall Anderson's three goals, the Dons were able to take the lead and win 12-10.

After an incredible regular season, Acalanes was seeded second in the 16-team NCS Division II playoffs. The Dons were matched up against the 15-seed Terra Linda for the first-round matchup on May 2. The Dons made sure to make a statement, winning 17-2 and advancing to the quarter-finals.

Blueprint Contributing Photo/ Nico O'Rourke

Heading off into NCS seeded 2nd, the Dons played Terra Lind and won with a high score of 17-2. The team would go on to play against Northgate, crushing the Broncos 14-8.

"We have already done some amazing things this season. Regardless of how the playoffs turn out everyone should feel proud, but there's still a lot more work to be done," Churchill said.

Women's Lacrosse

Connor Faust | Staff Writer

The Acalanes women's lacrosse team (6-2 league, 13-6 overall) started the second half of the season with a bang, crushing five out of the seven teams they played before running through the Diablo Valley Athletic League (DAL) tournament for second place. The team continued to push into the North Coast Section (NCS) tournament up into the semifinals.

Coutesy Photo/ Avery Ives

Coming off Spring Break with a record of 6-2, Acalanes had an early win against Alhambra on March 24, winning 17-2 in a clean victory.

"[The win] felt really good. It was fun. Especially coming back from spring break. And seeing everyone again," Senior Maya Wang said.

Acalanes lost to an upset against Justin Siena 9-20 on March 27. After the loss, Acalanes came back with a fierce streak of wins. Acalanes won against Ygnacio Valley on March 30 with a score of 14-3. They then went to play Clayton Valley on April 11 and won 14-2. On April 12, the girls beat Dougherty Valley 14-9. To continue the winning streak, they beat College Park on April 18, 15-7.

"The big focus is keeping the momentum going. The girls tend to get a little complacent after spring break. So coming back and getting them ready to play again [is the focus]," head coach Mark Rurka said.

Running with momentum, Acalanes slammed into the Miramonte Miradors on April 21, having lost to the team in the 2021-2022 season 10-8. The result was a close 14-13 win for Miramonte, placing Acalanes in the third-place seat as the team moved on to the DAL semifinals.

By chance, Miramonte placed second in DAL, matching the teams up for the DAL semifinal on April 25, resulting in a decisive 16-10 Acalanes victory.

"We watched the film, we figured out what they did that worked well, and how to stop that. And then we also figured out where we could improve, so like pick n' rolls. I think we also took advantage of their weaker defenders," Wang said

Momentum failed to hold going into the DAL championship, with a 8-16 loss to Campolindo on April 28. However, Acalanes was able to come back with a strong start to the NCS tournament.

"We've got a very good team, we just need to control the ball. We get real tight when we play Campo" Rurka said.

Starting NCS seated seventh, Acalanes knocked out Head Royce on May 2 while team captain Grace Imrie slid a goal in during overtime to win 9-8.

"I think it was really a team effort, everyone played amazing… winning in overtime, especially against [Miramonte], made it even better," Imrie said.

Acalanes played Marin Academy on May 4 for the semifinals, losing 3-13. Despite the loss, the team saw a strong season they're proud of and look forward to the next.

Baseball

Sophie Chinn | Staff Writer

The baseball team (9-11 overall, 1-5 league) looks to finish off the season on a positive note.

After falling to Pittsburg on the road, the Dons played Berkeley on March 25 at home. The Yellowjackets had a quick start and Dons ended up losing 1-7 On March 30, the Dons faced Antioch. After being tied 1-1 for most of the game, the Panthers scored in the bottom of the 7th. The Dons lost 1-2, however, both Gavin Bender and Nico O'Rourke contributed two hits.

Despite the losses, the Dons hosted Las Lomas the next day on March 31. Both teams played tough defense until the 6th when the Dons scored twice, and ended up prevailing 2-0.

"Our strength this year has definitely been our defense. We are able to pull it together and keep games close, especially in the early innings," senior Nico O'Rourke said.

After a week off for spring break, the Dons faced College Park on April 11. Once again the Dons played excellent defense, but a run by the Falcons in the 6th caused the Dons to lose 0-1.

Blueprint Contributing Photo/ Nico O'Rourke

On April 13, the Dons welcomed College Park High School for their second meeting. Mason Michlitsch and Benji O'Rourke scored two runs in the 2nd inning for the Dons to put them up two. The Falcons answered in the 6th with two runs of their own. With the game tied, extra innings were played until the 13th inning when College Park scored a run. The Dons battled but were bested 2-3.

On April 18, the Dons traveled to Benicia to compete against the Panthers once again. The boys were up 3-2 in the 5th, but gave up two runs in the 6th to lose 3-4.

On April 20, the Dons played Benicia at home. In the first inning, the Dons jumped out with a 3-0 lead and did not look back, finishing the game with a win by a score of 3-1.

The Dons have had to find ways to come back after tight games.

"We recap and discuss what went wrong, but we also talk about what we could have done better. Then we highlight the positives and we try not to dwell on the past. The next day, we reassess at practice and make adjustments for the next games," junior Aiden Yates said.

The next day on April 21, the Dons traveled to Napa to play Vintage. The game was tied 0-0 until the 6th when the boys' offense exploded with numerous doubles. The Dons defeated the Crushers 6-0.

On April 25, the boys welcomed Clayton Valley Charter and ended up losing 0-8.

On April 27, the Dons headed to Clayton Valley Charter for their second match-up. The Dons were able to score four runs in this game, but the Ugly Eagles beat them 4-9.

"We have had an up and down season, but have stuck through it together and hope to finish on a high note," O'Rourke said.

On May 2nd, the Dons went up against crosstown rival Campolindo. After a tough game, the boys came up short 3-6. The Dons rematched the Cougars on May 4th, once again coming short with a score of 3-5.

Softball

Brady Quinn | Staff Writer

The Acalanes Softball team (8-7 overall, 2-4 in league) is looking to close out the season with a winning record and a strong finish going into the playoffs.

Since Spring break, the Dons have had a packed schedule, which started with an away game at College Park High School on April 11. The Dons came up far short in this game, losing 12-1 to a very solid College Park High School team.

The Dons bounced back just a day later in an away game versus Berean Christian High School. They tallied nine runs through the first two innings and sealed the deal with lockdown defense for a 13-1 victory.

"We were able to win against [Berean Christian] because we all came together and played much more as a team and really connected throughout every aspect of the game," Acalanes sophomore Esa Orman said.

On April 18, the Dons played at home and won yet again in a close game versus Alhambra High School by a score of 4-3.

The Dons stretched their win streak to three on the next day in a home game versus Concord High School. Scoring most of their runs early, Acalanes was able to secure a blowout win 12-2.

On their third straight day with a game, the Dons' streak was snapped in a brutal 2-12 loss versus Northgate.

On April 24, the Dons traveled to Vallejo to play St. Patrick-St. Vincent. The Dons put up a good fight, almost coming back with three runs in the final inning, but fell short, losing 4-3.

The Dons played an away game against San Leandro just one day later. They got ahead early and were able to finish out the game winning 11-7.

"We were ready to play, going into it. We played an amazing game, probably the best one of the season. The whole team contributed, the entire batting order from top to bottom," senior Tess Gundacker said.

In their next game versus Berean Christian High School on April 27, they played strongly and won at home with 13 runs to Berean Christian's three.

Blueprint Contributing Photo/ Jake Megibow

Next, the team took a hit against Clayton Valley Charter, losing 1-16 in this game. The lull was short-lived, however, and the Dons came back out only two days later at home and beat Las Lomas 3-1. The softball team is looking forward to the playoffs and is hoping to get on a roll in their final regular season games.

Without question, the team prides itself on its ability to get through thick and thin together. During highs and lows, this team has fought and proven itself time after time.

"We constantly battle back, we never give up through anything. I think that's one of the great things about our team is we constantly lift each other up and we play to the final out, we never give up." Gundacker said.

Track and Field

Hanna Wisniewska | Podcast and Social Media Manager

The track and field team (6-1 overall, 6-1 league) is finishing the season strong as spring weather begins to come out. As the girls' team remains undefeated, with the boys only down one loss, the team is now moving into post-season and Diablo Athletic League (DAL) championships. Regardless of the rough conditions this season, the athletes still give it their all at the meets.

"The outdoor conditions have a lot of effect on performances, and we've not been extremely lucky this year in terms of weather, but we still managed to stay resilient and train hard regardless of the poor weather conditions and the few injuries we've had," senior Luca Mathias said.

The final meets challenged the track and field team, but with hard effort, the girls' team was able to take down Campolindo at the meet on April 19.

"I feel like there were some pretty hard competitions going into [the final meets], everyone was a little nervous, but everyone came together and did their best and the results were how we wanted and better than we expected," senior Portia Seymour said.

Throughout the season, the track and field athletes gave their best, wanting to beat their personal times and improve their performance with each meet. Teammates from the 2022-2023 track season recognized the two notable athletes frosh River Lockwood for his positive attitude and junior Collin Glick for his rapid improvement throughout the years.

Another group of athletes that contributed to the success of the team is the 4x100m girls' relay with a time of 50.00, placing first at the double dual meet against Las Lomas and Miramonte on April 24.

"We're seeded first in the DAL, going into finals next weekend and they ran the fastest than anyone at Acalanes has in like 5 or 6 years," Seymour said.

Despite track and field being a multi-department sport, the team doesn't always practice together, their team dynamic is still strong and united.

Blueprint Contributing Photo/ Santi Vignoles

"I made really good friends with all areas of the track team. One thing that Acalanes emphasizes is having a good team dynamic so I don't think separation really affects us too much," Mathias said.

While the team prepares to end the season, the athletes reflect on their experience from this year. One of many differences this year is the number of frosh joining the team, which earned positive feedback from upperclassmen teammates.

"Something that really stood out to me is just the amount of underclassmen we had joining the team and how willing they were to just trying new things," Mathias said.

Men's Tennis

Saylen Cardoni | Staff Writer

As the regular season comes to a close, the Acalanes men's tennis team (13-4 overall, 9-1 league) secures first place in the Diablo Athletic League (DAL) and focuses on North Coast Section (NCS) competition.

On March 23rd, the team won a resounding 9-0 victory against Las Lomas, not dropping a single match. Acalanes continued their strong play with an 8-1 victory over College Park on March 27th.

"We actually had a pretty rough start, the first good team we played we lost to. But, the troops have rallied and we've gotten it together pretty quickly and we haven't lost since." senior Aaron Brown said.

The team continued their win streak with another 8-1 defeat of College Park on March 30th.

Heading into multiple important league games against rival teams, the Acalanes men's tennis team prepared diligently for the large moments.

"We have been doing a lot of practice matches, both doubles and singles. It makes it easier to get used to high-pressure situations point to point," senior Ben Riensberg said.

On April 11th, Acalanes secured an important win against Miramonte, by a score of 5-4. The team continued their strong week with another win over a rival school, beating Campolindo 6-3.

The victories set Acalanes into the position in the DAL standings, with chances to win the entire league now in focus.

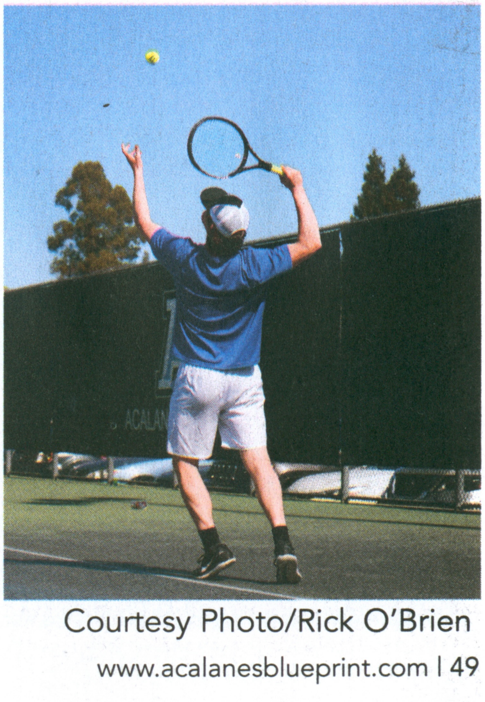
"Right now we are first in the league, and we have a duty to stay number one and are confident in it," Riensberg said. "It also felt really good to beat Campolindo."

On April 20th, the team defeated Las Lomas on Senior Night with a score of 9-0, granting Acalanes their 7th straight victory.

Members of the team attributed their success due to a tight team bond between all teammates. "Team morale is very high. We have a good bond between all the players," senior James Cortez said.

On April 21st, Acalanes battled Northgate to a 6-3 victory. On the 25th of the month, they again defeated Northgate by a score of 5-4. This win secured the Acalanes men's tennis team first place in the DAL.

"I think our team is really strong this year, I think we definitely have a chance to go really far in NCS," Riensberg said.



Courtesy Photo/Rick O'Brien

Men's Volleyball

Gus McKinney | Online Content Manager

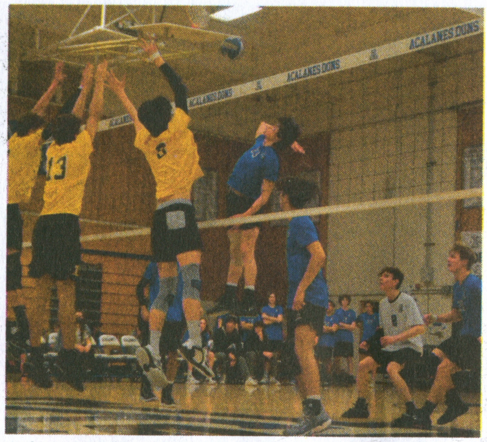
The Acalanes men's volleyball team (16-8 overall, 5-5 league) looks to continue a successful season with a deep run in the NCS playoffs.

On March 23, the Dons hosted the Campolindo Cougars in a rivalry game. The Dons lost by a score of 3-0. The team bounced back on March 23 with a win in an away game against Las Lomas High School by a score of 3-2. The team's communication worked well for them to emerge victorious.

"The team plays best when we work together and communicate. When we communicate, we have great rhythm and we are hard to beat," junior Joe Colachico said.

On March 23, the team hosted Campolindo but lost 0-3. They were able to bounce back against Las Lomas five days later and win 3-1. The team has four captains who bring different strengths.

"Aaron Alvira, Liam Stancik, Liam Hill and Joseph Castelli are the leaders of the team. Alvira and Stancik are both my captains who show positivity and leadership. Castelli and Hill show helpfulness and positivity. All four of these players are role models for my younger talent on the team and show passion for the game every time they walk into the gym," Head Coach Alexis Hammer said.



Blueprint Contributing Photo/ Addi Jones

The team hit a cold streak after playing at Berean Christian on March 29 and against Northgate on March 30, losing 0-3 and 2-3 respectively. The team bounced back against College Park on April 13 with a much-needed 3-0 win. The team focused on playing to their strengths and using what they knew worked.

"The strengths we have are hitting and digging. We are able to play smart when in the middle of a hard game and come out the other side positive and hyped for the next point. We have unstoppable attacks and a force behind our back row passers in ensuring the ball doesn't hit the floor," Hammer said.

The Dons traveled to Berean Christian on April 18 and lost 0-3. On April 20, they lost to crosstown rival Campolindo in a close game with a final score of 2-3.

After two consecutive losses, the team caught fire, winning against Las Lomas on April 25, 2-0. Two days later, they beat Northgate 3-2. On May 2, they played their first playoff game against Marin Catholic. They were victorious, winning by a convincing score of 3-0.

"I'm excited for the playoffs. I think it will be a good test for our team, but also a chance for us to show everyone what we are capable of," Colachico said.

Swimming

Jack Gebheardt | Print News Copy Editor

Closing off the season, the swim team finished (1-1 overall, 2-3 league) and warned their competitors of a fierce and mighty revival.

The Dons continued their season facing off against the Matadors on March 30 at Miramonte High School. Although the team fought hard in the meet, the Matadors prevailed 3-0.

Returning from Spring Break ready and hungry for new competition, the Dons defeated the Ugly Eagles 4-2 at home.

"The Clayton Valley meet was new this year. We didn't used to swim against them but it was fun because we got to swim against some new competition," senior Sarah McCarthy said.

Continuing the streak, the Dons went to Walnut Creek, where they fought their only other out-of-league meet against the Northgate Broncos. The Dons ended in a close game of 3-2.

Nearly a decade after his days on the Acalanes Swim team, Head Coach Brett Usinger has reflected on how team-building activities can foster a welcoming community.

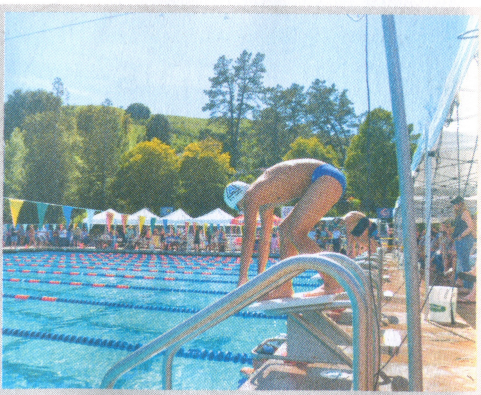
"One unforeseen benefit of coaching a team you were on is that you are able to really emphasize and motivate the team with old traditions. A lot of these kids are pretty new to a lot of the out-of-the-pool stuff that we do as a team which I think is just as important as what we do in the pool. It's nice to be able to share our experiences as swimmers on the team rather than just being these faceless coaches that came out of nowhere," Usinger said.

A memorable night for some swimmers this year appears to be the classical Senior Night, as the large group of seniors were celebrated with the team.

"Senior night was so much fun. There were a lot of like parents and a good little group of seniors there to support as well. All the coaches did a little personal speech for everyone and we got to hang out with our families and everything, so it was super fun," senior Sophi Mckay said.

The coaches reflected on highlights throughout multiple years of swim team with the seniors especially after the COVID-19 Pandemic interrupted the program.

"It was pretty amazing just to have so many [seniors], so Senior Night was a really cool way for both [Coach] Nick and I to share stories of these kids. The great thing is because we've actually had a swim team for the past three years … we've been able to amass multiple seasons of stories and be able to tell the overall swimmer story for these seniors," Usinger said.



Blueprint Contributing Photo/ Lexa Sappal

The Varsity and JV swim teams finished off the season in the Valley Division League Championship (DALS) where women's varsity placed second overall, and men's varsity placed fifth overall.

In the following weeks, select swimmers who qualified for North Coast Sectionals (NCS) competed during the meet on Saturday, May 6. Those who qualified for California Interscholastic Federation's (CIF) state championships will also attend the three-day meet located in Clovis California, from May 11 to 13.

Athletes of the Issue

Sophie Chinn | Online Editor at Large

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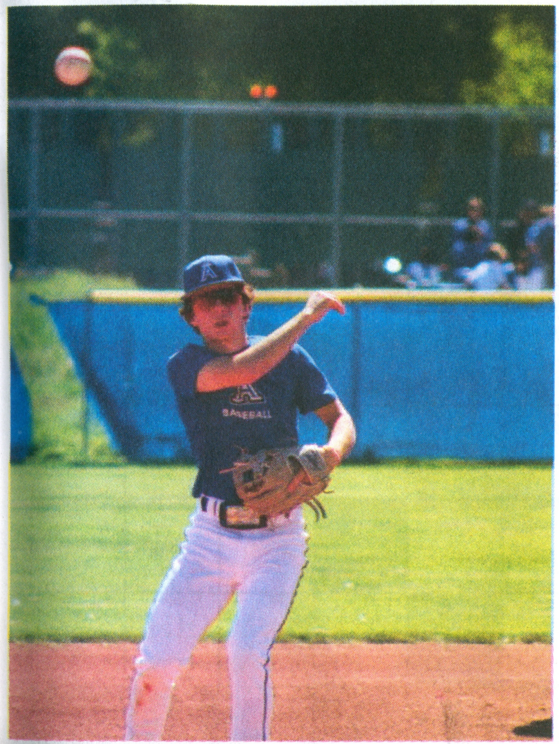

Blueprint Contributing Photo/Jeffrey Strause

James Stadt

James Stadt, the sophomore sensation, continues to display his offensive and most notably defensive skills on the baseball team as the season comes to a close.

After being moved up to varsity halfway through his freshman year, Stadt has excelled and become a prominent player on the field in every game this season.

As the shortstop, Stadt is the captain of the infield as his role is to set up plays and make sure everyone is in position for each pitch.

When asked about his best skill, all his teammates say the same thing: defense.

"James is a determined fielder and lets nothing past him. He is great at anticipating where the ball is going to go and then fielding it quickly. He is always on his toes and in a stance when each pitch is thrown," senior Nico O'Rourke said.

Stadt not only has great technique and spirit on defense, but he is tenacious on the offensive side as well.

"James is a really good contact hitter which allows him to move the guys on base over and he is an efficient bunter. He is able to put pressure on the defense and get on base himself," sophomore Keegan Goddard said.

Despite his age, Stadt has proved his maturity and team-first mentality on and off the field. He ensures the energy in the dugout is high and takes pride in the team's goals.

"It's pretty hard to find someone that is so gifted when it comes to baseball and someone that puts that much time and hard work into the sport, let alone being humble at the same time and staying a team guy throughout the whole thing," senior Tyler Worthington said.

Maya Wang

As the regular season comes to an end, senior Maya Wang continues to have a standout year on both ends of the lacrosse field.

Not only is Wang a competitive player, but she keeps the energy up and holds her teammates accountable during practices and games.

"Maya's best quality is her drive to win. She puts 100% effort into every game to win and she motivates the rest of the team to do the same," senior Hanna Hageboeck said.

Along with her competitive drive, Wang is a persistent offensive and defensive midfielder. She displays her leadership at all times and is not afraid to use her voice to control the center of the field.

"Maya contributes immensely on offense by driving with the ball and shooting powerful shots. She is one of the top goal-scorers on the team. On defense, Maya is generally matched up against one of the better players on the other team, and she works with the other defenders to regain possession of the ball," junior Ella Thomason said.

Wang is a crucial player and additionally is one of the team captains. Wang has taken on her role with ease and guides her teammates with confidence.

"Maya encourages and supports everyone on the team, and leads by example. All of us on the team respect her and work to follow her lead and improve our game," Thomason said.

Wang will continue to thrive in her final year as the girls lacrosse team enters the playoffs.

"She is super dedicated and has stood out in countless games this season by scoring a big goal when we need it," sophomore Megan Churchill said.

Courtesy Photo/David Rumberg

Crossword

Created by Zach Snyder and Griffin Ruebner

1	2	3	4	5	■	6	7	8	9	10
11					■	12				
13					■	14				
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31	32	33			■	34			35	36
37					■	38				
39					■	40				

Across

1. Commonly associated with bottles and being 1-Down
6. Tilted to an uneven position
11. Bacteria abundantly found at CAFOs
12. Tool to illuminate a room
13. A main principle of a religion
14. Activity on Christmas morning
15. Symptoms include dry, itchy skin on the face and behind the knee
17. The diet to go on when throwing up
19. Major airline headquartered in Chicago
23. Body part that regulates pressure changes
24. The end of the work week: Abbr.
25. Cool and fashionable
26. The base ingredient in 18-Down
28. Base x Height
29. An athlete's potential to excel
31. Inhabitant of the largest oil exporter
34. A sweet treat _____ a jumping frog after leaving platform 9 and 3/4
37. A vast expanse of treeless land
38. "I'll take one __ ___"
39. Celtics, Rangers, and Harry play __ ___
40. Temperature controllers in modern houses

Down

1. Is 1-Across ___?
2. One or eleven
3. Piece of a record player
4. Vote in
5. Circular salty snack
6. Graduates of an institution
7. Mountain of religious significance
8. Soviet security agency
9. Job to ensure safe conditions
10. Truck trading website
16. Bills in France and Spain
17. Common casino action
18. Pasta sauce family surname
20. Warnings of attack
21. First three letters of "Old McDonald" vowel string
22. UK Parliamentary Act to safeguard computer information
24. The action of transfering a file to a different computer or system
27. German cars with circular logos
28. Admire, love
30. Widely respected and commended figure
31. Mineral spring
32. Important computer key
33. You in a text + morning abbreviation
35. Controversial communication platform: Abbr.
36. ... --- ...

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